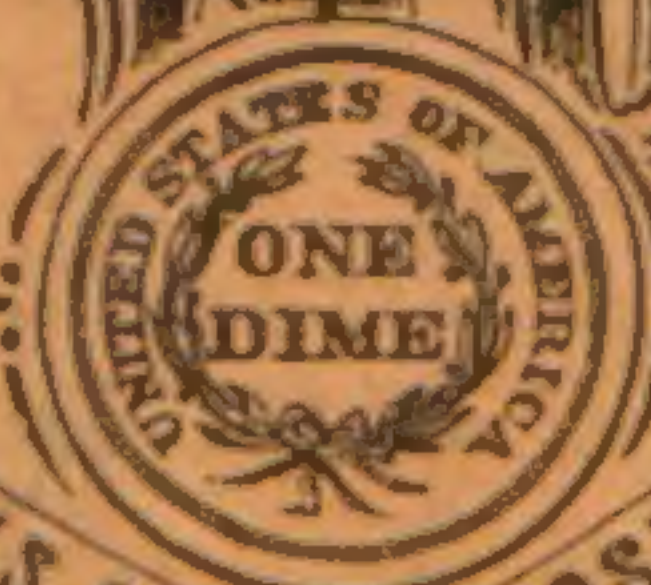


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THE
HUNTER'S ESCAPE:

A TALE OF THE NORTH WEST IN 1862.

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS.

AUTHOR OF "SETH JONES," "BILL ALFON, TRAPPER," "THE FOREST
SPY," "KENT, THE RANGER," "HUNTER'S CABIN," ETC., ETC.

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THE HUNTER'S ESCAPE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MISSIONARY.

And when the solemn Sabbath came,
We gathered in the wood,
And lifted up our hearts in prayer
To God, the only good.
Our temples then were earth and sky,
None others did we know,
In the days when we were pioneers.
Fifty years ago!—W. D. GALLAGHER.

AWAY up in the north-western portion of Minnesota, the forest-arcades were echoing with unwonted sound. On this still Sabbath morning in the early autumn of 1862, the voice of thanksgiving and prayer rose sweetly upward from that mighty solitude. On the spot where the stranger might have expected the hoarse oath of the trader, the war-whoop of the Indian, or the shriek of the wild animal, ascended those sacred songs and holy words.

So quiet was the air on this Sabbath morning, that the music was heard a long, long distance away. On the banks of a little stream to the northward, a band of trappers suddenly paused in their work and listened. Ah! what recollections were recalled to their minds by those faint words of song. They saw again the little village church in the valley far away, where in boyhood they had listened and joined in the same hymn of praise. They sat again by the side of their parents, and heard their voices mingle with those around them. And when the long-meter doxology swelled out in rich, sonorous tones, there was more than one bronzed cheek wet with tears. It was not until the sound had died away and every thing was silent that they resumed their work again.

Had a person traced out the source of this music he would have found it came from a small clearing, in front of the "Mission-house." The latter was a small, square building of logs,

erected without any regard to appearance, standing near the western side of the clearing. Directly back of this was about an acre of land under cultivation. Maize, potatoes, and the usual variety of garden vegetables were here found in great profusion, for the land was of exceeding richness and needed but the opportunity to yield the wealth that lay in its bosom.

Rough and unsightly as was the exterior of this building, the neat and cleanly interior showed that the hand of woman was busy there. Her magic touch alone could give that appearance of tidiness and comfort that impressed the stranger upon entering, and her voice alone could utter those sweet, bird-like notes which might be heard at almost any hour of the day.

Father Richter, the missionary, was a man fully seventy years old. For forty years he had been a laborer among the poor, neglected red-men. At the time the religious world was so moved upon the subject of missions, and were nobly engaged in sending their missionaries to the far-off Pacific islands, to India and almost every portion of the habitable globe, young Harvey Richter became filled with a holy zeal to do something for his great Master. He was struck with wonder that the most needy and most accessible field—which lay at their very doors—should be almost entirely overlooked. The more he inquired and learned regarding the Indians, the more impressed did he become with the necessity of sending laborers among them. At his own request, he was appointed missionary to the north-west. His allowance was very meager and he was compelled every few years to make a return journey to a frontier town to obtain it; but he made it sufficient and never asked for an increase. A few years later, upon one of these visits, instead of finding a stipend, he found his recall awaiting him, with the announcement that it was no longer possible to sustain his mission.

But Harvey Richter, accompanied by his faithful servant, Teddy, returned to his lowly cabin and field of labor, and for over thirty years, nothing was heard of him or his wife, who had accompanied him to his distant station. During this lapse of time, great changes had taken place in the missionary's family. Ten years after his advent among the Indians, he had laid his boy beneath the sod, and fifteen years after this event, his beloved wife was placed beside him. She left

behind her an image and continual remembrancer of herself in a young infant that had only time to receive the kiss and long farewell of its mother, ere her lips were closed in death. It was nearly at this period that Teddy, who had accompanied a war-party of Indians, was shot by one of the enemies, so that Father Richter's only white companion was his daughter, Cora, now grown to the estate of womanhood.

Cora possessed the same self-sacrificing devotion to her Master that had always characterized the parents, and was destined to become one of the most influential workers for good that had ever appeared among the aborigines of the Great West.

On the Sabbath morning in question, some fifty Indians, male and female, were squatted around the clearing in front of the house, while the missionary, his gray locks hanging down upon his shoulders, and his blue eyes lit up with a holy fire, was proclaiming the word of God to them. He stood behind a sort of rude desk, upon which lay the open Bible. His left hand rested upon its pages while he gesticulated with his right. His white hair and eyebrows, his clean-shaven face, his Roman nose, his simple, unpretending dress, gave an impressive dignity to his appearance, and the words, as they fell from his lips, struck upon willing and listening hearts. His position was such that the shadow of a huge tree protected him from the rays of the sun; but his hearers had no such vail and wished for none. Like the eagle of their solitudes, the fiercest sunlight failed to blear their vision or to distract their attention.

There were brawny and scarred warriors, with coarse, repulsive features, their black, wiry hair falling into their laps as they inclined their heads, as though they wished the uttered words might descend upon them; there were frowsy squaws scarcely less repellent than their husbands, some with short black pipes inserted between their snaggy teeth; there were younger and more comely maidens and children—all holding a respectful silence while Father Richter was addressing them.

An occasional guttural ejaculation from some of the older ones showed their appreciation of the truths that were uttered in their own highly figurative language; and, now and then, a head nodded forward several times for the purpose of

expressing the same sentiment. Take the audience as a whole, their deportment and interest would compare very favorably with that of any congregation in a civilized country, although their dress and appearance would have suffered from the same comparison.

The services continued for about an hour, when they were concluded by prayer and the singing of the doxology. Being then dismissed, they lounged away from the clearing, some to return to their wigwams, others to bask, smoke and sleep in the sun until the day was past. All had too much regard for their kind "*Father*" and for the truths he had uttered to hunt or fish before the morrow.

The forty years' residence of Father Richter among the Indians had given him a subtle knowledge of their character which could not lead him astray. He had fled, years before, with his young wife, through the trackless wilderness, from the remorseless beings who sought their blood; he had returned again, and three different times, two of which were in the dead of winter, had his dwelling been laid in ashes. He had seen the war-whoop transform the apparently mild and stolid beings around him, into furious demons whose rage could only be calmed by the offering of blood; and, cowering like the lamb before the wolf, he had shrunk from them until the turbulent storm of passion passed over. But like his divine Teacher who had suffered and died before him, he could not be diverted from the great work of his life. His unvarying faithfulness, his uncomplaining suffering, the exalted consistency of his life and teachings, gradually impressed the savage hearts, and since the birth of Cora, these periodical simooms of passion had left him unharmed. In their wildest and most ungovernable moments, they never offered harm or insult to the missionary or his daughter; and his little log-hut was like a rock in the ocean, safe against the howling of the tempest or the beating of the storm.

Father Richter's extended residence among the Indians, we say, had given him a knowledge of their character which could not lead him astray. And, as his experienced eye swept over them upon the Sabbath in question, he saw that their emotions were swayed by some unusual cause. Something out of the usual line of events had occurred, and whatever it

might be, it was of an extraordinary character. He tremblingly hoped at first that it might be the premonitions of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit; but a few moments convinced him that such could not be the case. Although the attention paid his discourse, to an unpracticed eye, was as respectful as usual, yet there was a sullen scowl upon more than one brow that looked evil to something or some one.

The missionary could not repress his anxiety and apprehension, when, at the conclusion of the services, he entered his house, and Cora, as usual, seated herself beside him, leaning upon his knees and looking up into his benignant face.

"What is it that troubles you?" she asked, almost immediately.

"I am troubled about these poor Indians. I detected signs to-day that fill me with the greatest fear."

"Fear of what?"

"Fear of another outbreak. The year before you were born, I noticed upon a Sabbath morning the same profound silence in my congregation, the same deep-drawn breaths, scowling looks, and aimless movements. That night our house was burned to the ground, and through the instrumentality of a young unconverted Sioux—scarcely more than a boy—our lives were saved."

"Who was he?"

"Christian Jim—who since then has become a shining light among the followers of our blessed Jesus."

"Do you think, father, they would harm us?"

"It is not that fear that gives me trouble, although I may have a little anxiety upon your account. It is sad to think that their wayward natures are so strong in these Indians, that after baptism and connection for years with our church, they sometimes in a moment relapse into their former barbarism. I have sought all these long years to teach them to subdue and overcome this sinful warring of the flesh against the spirit. There are many of our members—such as Christian Jim, or Indian Jim as he is sometimes called, for instance—of whom we need have no fear, and then there are others who cause me much doubt and misgiving."

"I sat by the door as usual when you were preaching to-day and could not help observing Jim—I suppose because he

sat nearest to me. His clothes were all torn and tattered, and faded, as though he must have traveled a long distance."

"It is over a month since I last saw him among my people."

"Was there any thing in his manner that attracted your notice?"

"It was his, perhaps, that I noticed more than that of any one else. Although his head was inclined, and he frequently looked up into my eyes, I am sure he scarcely heard a word I uttered. He has brought some intelligence to our people that has caused a profound sensation among them."

"He will assuredly inform you, will he not?"

"I have no doubt of it; it may be that he wishes to do it secretly and is awaiting the opportunity to speak to me without being observed by the others."

"There is a family by the name of Brainerd a considerable distance to the southward with whom Jim is on quite intimate terms, and it may be that he has just returned—"

Father Richter knitted his brows as though from a sharp pain and lifted his hand for silence.

"I understand it all—I understand it all," he repeated, as if to himself. "Alas! it is as I feared."

"What, father?"

"There has been an outbreak of the Indians at the Upper Agency and some of the other missions. I remember a warning that I received some six weeks ago from that hunter who remained with us over night."

"Here is Christian Jim to speak for himself."

Those who have done us the favor to read the little volume entitled "Indian Jim," will recall this friendly Sioux, without a detailed description of his appearance in this place. They will recollect also that after parting from his friends a few miles to the westward of St. Paul, he made all haste back again for the purpose of assisting others who might need his experienced hand and eye. Separating from the small body of cavalry, and leaving the burning houses and flying refugees to his left, he made a *détour* to the north-west, and arrived at the mission of Father Richter upon the Sabbath morning in question. He was strongly attached to this good man and daughter, and although he was conscious of the great influence

they exerted over the wild spirits around them, the Sioux knew too much of his own people to trust them implicitly. He feared that this unparalleled outbreak would sweep them into its midst, and they would seize the avenging knife and tomahawk.

Vague rumors had reached this branch of the Sioux of trouble among their kindred, but their peculiar situation and circumstances shut out all definite information until the arrival of Christian Jim among them. He gave the particulars of the massacre that had then been in progress for several weeks, exhorting his brethren at the same time in the strongest terms to refrain from joining the insurgents, as a speedy punishment was sure to be meted out to the transgressors by their great Father at Washington.

The door of Father Richter's house was never fastened, and it was always open to those who chose to come. Scarcely an hour of the day passed without some visitor, and, on the present occasion, the entrance of Christian Jim might have been taken as a matter of course, had it not been for the circumstances already narrated.

"I welcome you, Awahnock," said the missionary, addressing his visitor by his Indian name. "It is a long time since I have seen your face among my people."

Skilled as was the savage in concealing his emotion, he could not hide his agitation from those keen, searching blue eyes that were bent upon him as he took a seat.

"Been long way off—helping white folks."

"Who?"

"Mr. Brainerd—oder folks wid him—Little Crow bad man," said the Indian, breaking off in the abrupt manner so peculiar to his people.

"I fear that he is ambitious and designing. He impressed me as such during the visits he has made in the course of the last two or three years."

"Bad man—bad man."

"There is something upon your mind, Awahnock; do not hesitate to let me know what it is. You need not fear the presence of Cora."

"Kill all white folks—hurt women and children, 'frail day come here—take scalp of gal."

"Afraid *they* will come here, or afraid *our* own people will rise and slay us? How is it, Awahnock?" asked the missionary, in a voice that was startlingly loud and distinct.

"'Fraid *dem*," he replied, with a significant glance toward the open door.

"You are an Indian, Awahnock, and ought to know your own people; but then I have lived among them longer than have you. I must say that I am a little uneasy, but I have not one-half the fear that seems to possess you. Have you heard any thing positive?"

"Injin *look* bad—t'ink good deal—don't say much."

"They seem to be uneasy and restless, and I should not like to answer for the safety of any white man who should venture among us at this time; but I doubt whether in their most excited moments one of them would raise his hand against me or mine."

"Mugalwah bad," repeated the Sioux, scarcely above a whisper.

"I must own that my apprehension is regarding him."

"And why is that, father? Is he not a Christian Indian?"

"He was baptized twenty years ago, but nature is strong in him still. He it was who applied the torch to my dwelling, but he also assisted in building a new one, so that we may believe he sincerely repented of that deed; but when his blood is aroused he is a dangerous man. He acted strangely this morning, during devotional exercises."

"Mugalwah bad man—*bad* man," repeated Christian Jim, looking down to the floor and shaking his head.

It was now near noon, and Cora busied herself in preparing the meal, while her father and their visitor continued the conversation. The missionary learned the particulars of the escape of the Brainerd family and their friends, and gathered an idea of the fearful nature and extent of the outbreak. His own location was such that in case the storm burst over his head, he could not escape by the same means that had saved them. It might be said that our former friends were on the south-eastern border of this district of fire and blood, while Father Richter was on the north-west. By plunging farther into the forest toward the mountains, with a few faithful Christian Indians, as his companions, he might elude these ~~harm~~

blood-hounds until their thirst was quenched. But he could not bring himself to believe that one of his people—not even Mugulwah—could offer him harm, and he resolved therefore not to heed the advice of Christian Jim, but to remain where he was.

The Sioux stayed but a comparatively short time, and then sauntered out of the house and across the clearing. The eye of more than one dusky warrior was fixed upon him with a penetrating, suspicious look, and there was many a glance that was not friendly. All knew the unswerving faithfulness of this Indian, and now when the fires in their breasts were beginning to flicker and fan themselves into life again, and they felt their old natures struggling like giants within them, the sight of his calm, unimpassioned face drove them almost to madness. There was many a heart that feared and trembled—for they understood their own nature and realized they were walking upon the edge of a volcano.

It was the custom with Father Richter, when the Sabbaths were pleasant, to hold two services during the day—one in the forenoon and one in the afternoon. On the present occasion he was gratified to see all of his people come together at the usual time; but there were more palpable manifestations of an uneasy feeling among them.

He preached with unusual fervor that afternoon and besought God's blessing upon his effort. He watched with an anxious eye its effect upon the leading spirits in his audience. His conclusions were such as to leave him in a more troublesome doubt than ever.

It was with a heavy, saddened heart that at the close of the exercises he made his way into his house again. Could it be that his forty years' labor among the North American Indians was for naught? Were their natures such that there was no christianizing them? After years of profession and a consistent life, were they to relapse in a few hours into barbarism again? Had the seed that he had sown fallen upon stony ground?

Ah, no! good Father Richter; the seed that you have scattered shall bear its fruit in eternity, and when at the last great day you confront your account, you shall find a boundless harvest awaiting you!

It was this thought, as we have said before, that gave the minister more pain than any anxiety regarding the personal security of himself and daughter.

As he made his way to his house, he became conscious that some one was following him. He did not turn until he was about to step in his own door, and then, he observed, with some surprise, that it was Mugalwah. The savage hesitated when upon the threshold, as if in doubt whether to enter or not, but a kind invitation decided him.

Standing in the very center of the floor, he folded his arms and then scowled upon the two beings before him.

"You seem in trouble," said Father Richter, in his mild, sweet voice. "Sit down and acquaint me with it."

The Indian declined the proffered chair and remained standing. He refused all questions for a moment and then said, in his own tongue:

"Yengese traders bad men—they tell lies."

"I am sorry, Mugalwah, that such is the case; but we must set them a better example."

"They make treaties, promise us blankets, and beads, and money, and powder, but they lie, they never give them to us. They call us mighty warriors, and say the Great Father at Washington loves us and will send us our annuities; but they lie. When they get the Indian's land they call him a dog, and if he asks for money or food they kick him and say he may starve for all they care."

The glitter of the black eye and the unconscious quickening of the breath showed that the savage was working himself into a passion. It was therefore the aim of the missionary to pour oil upon the troubled waters.

"You remember what I told you about Jesus Christ this afternoon. He had the power to kill all those who treated him so badly, and yet he never struck them a blow, nor ever said bad word, but they put him to death at last."

"He was a great, good man," said the savage, with more calmness.

"Yes; and we should all strive to be like him."

"Why ain't white man like him?" he asked, with eager quickness.

Father Richter sadly shook his head.

"He is bad, indeed, and our Great Father alone will punish him—"

"And so will I," interrupted Mugalwah, in a voice of thunder, drawing his scalping-knife from his belt. "Manitou will smile upon me for punishing him. I go now to seek him."

"Before you go," continued the missionary, in the same low voice, "let us kneel down and pray for his blessing upon you."

The savage hesitated a moment, but he could not refuse. A feeling partly of shame took possession of him, as he knelt upon the floor, and Father Richter began his petition. The prayer was short and fervid, and of such a nature that it could not fail to strike reproach to the most hardened criminal contemplating deeds such as had entered into the heart of this professing Christian Indian. But when the missionary and his daughter arose from their knees and looked around them, Mugalwah was gone. He had silently glided out while the prayer was being offered.

CHAPTER II.

AN INDIAN TREATY.

THOUGH they were the children of the forest, and though they left no monuments of sculpture, painting and poetry, yet great was their fall, and sorrowful is the story of their wrong.—MILFORD BARD.

SOME time previous to the events narrated in the preceding pages, there was a large gathering of Indians and white men upon the border. Their actions showed that they had congregated for some important purpose.

The resistless march of civilization to the westward had been gradually and surely absorbing that portion of Minnesota which, by right of treaty, belonged to the Indians. There had been murmurings and occasional threats of resistance to this unscrupulous innovation, which all saw would as effectually drive them from the country as if the army of the United States had marched against them. Fish, the beaver, and the hunt were their means of subsistence. The former

were thinning out from the continuous draught the whites made upon them ; the sound of the ax and the falling trees had frightened the beaver and the buffalo further westward into undisturbed solitudes ; and, as it is almost impossible for the Indians to change their nature—except in occasional instances, and become farmers, like whites—their own self-preservation compelled them to move on toward the setting sun.

The sagacious agents and officials of our Government became aware that the territory at present belonging to the savages was of the most productive kind, while that to which they wished to remove them was little better than a desert. The step to do this was a simple one. All that was necessary was to make a treaty.

Accordingly, on this morning, a large number of leading Indians, and agents, and traders were assembled together for the purpose of making the treaty in due form. It would have been observed that the whites were very loquacious and assiduous in their efforts to make a favorable impression upon the savages. That "villainous compound," known as whisky, was dealt out with a liberal hand, and, in spite of the determined efforts of the older chiefs, many of the most influential of their number became intoxicated in a beastly manner. They had just reached that frame of mind to which the wily officials had been assiduously assisting them, and would willingly have celed, had it been in their power, their very souls for another draught of the fiery liquid. It being manifest that the whisky had done its work, the officials concluded it time to begin the ceremony.

The first important step was to assure the Indians, through the interpreter, how unbounded was the affection entertained toward them by their Great Father at Washington ; the eloquent orator informing them that it was impossible for him to sleep o' nights on account of his harrowing anxiety ; that he was becoming emaciated and worn to a skeleton ; that, after long nights of prayer, he had concluded that their welfare demanded that they should be removed to a new country—a new country that abounded with fish and all kinds of game, where the red-men could not fail of becoming speedily the most powerful of all the tribes that surrounded them. The

orator concluded by intimating that an extravagant price would be paid for their lands.

The chief who replied to this speech, was a tall, middle-aged Indian, of a stern and dignified appearance, who had carefully abstained from taking a drop of the whisky, knowing too well what the consequences would be if any of it passed his lips. He made, in the first place, some pointed references to several previous treaties to which he had been a party, whose stipulations had never been carried out. He referred to the annuities long since due and unpaid; to the outrageous claims of the traders which swallowed up all their supplies when sent out by Government; to the atrocious acts of debauching their women and maltreating their men when they asked for justice. He added, finally, that his people were satisfied with the land upon which they were living, and they were not willing to leave it for the desert-like region further west.

The answering speech of the white was artful. He expressed his regret at the shortcomings of his *brethren*, and assured the chief and his meeting-companions, upon his honor, that nothing similar should be repeated. Their Great Father at Washington had learned with sorrow of these bad acts of his agents, and was resolved that none but good men should be henceforth appointed, and that every right should be guaranteed them. He expressed a hope that the chief whom he was addressing would do his best to persuade his people and brother chiefs of the wisdom of their removing at once; insinuating that their Great Father at Washington would greatly dislike to *compel* them to go.

The savage had sagacity enough to understand the meaning of this remark. The matter was, simply, the Indians must give up their lands willingly or unwillingly, as they chose it should be. Still, for the purpose of securing a good price, if for nothing else, the chief continued to hesitate, until finally the remuneration was named. This was a liberal sum, and if the red-men could have felt sure of receiving it, they would have felt somewhat satisfied with the results of the treaty; but they knew there was a gauntlet of "claims" for it to run which would well nigh swallow the amount itself.

However, there was no help for it, and the formula of

signing the treaty took place. The sober Indians made their "mark," while their drunken companions made a daub or a scrawl that served as well as the most beautiful chirography.

Prominent among the whites was a long, lank-visaged, weazen-faced personage, known by the name of Matt Larkins, whose profession for the last ten years had been that of a whisky trader. Where or when he obtained his supplies, no one knew; but he was rarely seen unless he had a small keg upon his shoulder, which never seemed full nor empty. The liquid jingling of the fluid could be heard as he walked, and the ravenous appetites of a score of Indians or hunters was unable to exhaust its supply.

Like the majority of speculators and adventurers, he was from New England, and during the years of his trade upon the border had accumulated quite a fortune. Still his insatiate avarice craved more, and when his scalp was in imminent danger he did not hesitate to venture in the wilderness among the people whom he so deeply wronged by his retailing the destroying fluid. He never refused to trust the Indians for any amount they wished; he knowing that he would be paid ten-fold when the annuities arrived. He, in conjunction with others as unprincipled as himself, had defrauded the savages in this manner of tens of thousands of dollars.

Several times in his wanderings he had fallen into the hands of missionaries, who had done their utmost to persuade him to give up the terrible traffic, but all in vain. The orbit which he described through Minnesota brought him at periodical times to the Clearing. The first time he arrived there, he hid his keg in the woods, and remained a day or two in the cabin of Father Richter, partaking of his hospitality, and inquiring, with an air of concern, about the spiritual welfare of his people, after which he passed into the woods, took his cask to the village, and distributed it among them, receiving an enormous profit from the Indians, who were set wild by one taste of the liquid. The result of this act was a desperate quarrel, in which two savages were killed and one maimed for life.

A rather demonstrative sort of wrath upon the part of Father Richter may be excused, when, three years after, Matt Larkins came plodding his way across the clearing in the

direction of his house. He could scarcely believe his eyes until the man halted directly in front of his door, dropped his keg carefully to the ground, and extended his hand with a broad smile. Without noticing his salutation, he picked up the cask, and, raising it above his head, dashed it to pieces upon a stone. Then, in a voice of thunder, he commanded the trader to depart, and never to make his appearance before him again.

Before leaving, Matt Larkins hinted that he should like to be remunerated for the loss he had sustained, and remarked also that he desired to spend a few hours in the society of Cera. This was the spark that fired the magazine. As quick as lightning, he was caught in the iron grasp of Father Richter, who ran across the clearing with him, and then flung him into the woods, as he would have thrown a deadly viper from him.

The next day after the conclusion of the treaty, Matt Larkins sat in the back room of a trader's building, in confidential conversation with the short, stumpy, bullet-headed trader himself. Though widely different in physiognomy, each face offering distinct characteristics, both bore the unmistakable impress of avarice, cupidity, and a low, groveling nature. The object of their lives seemed to be solely to amass wealth at the expense of the Indians around them. Both had glasses standing before them, from which they took semi-occasional draughts, each smoking a short black brier-wood as he did so.

"That ere treaty them fellers made yisterday, is a hunky grand thing for us who're in the business," remarked the trader.

"Dunno as it'll improve my business much, as I have all I can do now, and you see it ain't easy to improve sich a perfession."

"But the Government give a good price for them lands, isn't they? How them poor devils would open their eyes if they could only lay their hands onto it. But I wonder how much they'll feel in their claws, eh, Matt?"

"Not a heap; I've some claims that must be met afore they git a grab at it."

"How much?"

"If any body should ax you, and you should tell 'em five thousand dollars, you wouldn't be *very fur* out of the way."

"The deuce! How come—"

"'Sh! don't say nothing; I've got the thing all down on paper all straight."

"Say, Matt," continued the trader, with an insinuating smile, as he edged nearer to him, "let's hear how you done it. My claims, as first made out, footed up only twenty-five hundred dollars. Me and my clerk, Billson, worked at it half the night and managed to list it up to four thousand; but, hang me, we couldn't raise it another peg. Let's hear how you done it?"

"Have you got the claims handy?"

"They're just in 'tother room."

"Fetch 'em."

The trader whisked into the salesroom, and in a moment appeared, bearing a large roll of sheets pasted together, which he unrolled before Matt Larkins. The latter ran his eye rapidly down the long list of articles and names, and then tossed it from him with a disdainful expression.

"Just what I thought, Womple; you and your clerk don't know much about the business. Don't you see, all these Indians *is alive!*"

Womple's face brightened.

"Now, one-third of the names in my account belong to Indians that have been under the ground for the last three years. The agents don't know the difference, and, if they did, what's the odds? You know they ain't pertickler, especially if there's a chance to turn an honest penny."

"I never thought of that," repeated Womple; "it's a good idea. How much would your bills amount to, ef they was *just right?*"

"Five thousand dollars."

"You know what I mean."

"About six or seven hundred. Strikes me too, Sam, you're mighty fraid to *charge* for what you've got here. These hatchets, knives, and ammunition, ought to be a heap more. Such things have riz amazingly since the war—then you can say something about extra cost of transportation and—fadge! Womple, such a roll as that ought to foot up clean ten thousand

dollars, and all I've got to say is that you're a fool if you don't make it do that. My motto is, 'improve your chances.'"

"I'll doo't; I've learned a thing or two in the last ten minutes."

"You'll learn a thing or two more, when you've traded with these Sioux as long as I have. Now, some folks pretend to pity these miserable dogs; but, as for me, I can't see what there is to pity about them. They're a dirty, greasy, bloodthirsty set, and it's our Christian duty to make all the money possible out of 'em. Leastways, that's what I've been trying to do the last ten years."

"These infornal missionaries play the mischief with our business. They git their New England notions—"

"Hold on, Womple, I'm from glorious old New England, don't you slander her in my presence."

"And you're a fine specimen, too! Them missionaries git their outlandish notions in the heads of the dogs, and we can't do much with 'em."

"My beverage is purty sure to fetch 'em. They may hold back a while, but it's certain to jerk 'em at last. The hardest place I ever got into is up north-west, where old Father Richter, as they call him, is stationed. The Indians had sot their face so strong agin me, that I came mighty near losing my skulp when they fust got sight of me; but they couldn't stand the fire-water. As soon as they got a taste of that, I had 'em, and I made a good thing off my sales."

"Where was the old man all this time?"

"He didn't know nothing about it, till it was too late—he! he! he! he!"

"Have you been there since?"—

"Yes; but I didn't get treated so well," returned the trader with a more serious countenance. "He busted my keg and then ran me out of the Clearing."

Womple laughed heartily, and asked whether his Indian friends did not come to his relief.

"Come to my relief! No; do you suppose they cared any thing for me? It was only the *whisky* they was after; and, as I hadn't that, I left till I could get some more. Howsumever I'll pay that old man off yit."

"Larkins," said the agent, assuming the air of a philosopher

"do you know I have my doubts about Indians having souls?"

"I dunno," replied the trader, indifferently, as he enjoyed his pipe.

"Yes; well, I have. They're like monkeys—a little higher brutes, but sometimes I think they ain't much either. They stand in the way of modern civilization, and I think it's a disgrace to a Christian nation that we allow 'em to live."

"Y-a-s," drawled Larkins, as though the subject was not interesting to him. "Y-a-s; it might be a good thing for civilization, if they was out the way, but how about the whisky and trading business?"

"That's so."

"Then, you see, they're like snakes; you may thin 'em out as much as you please, but there will always be a few left."

"Womple," called out Larkins, as if to direct his attention particularly to what he was about to say, "you hain't been on the border as long as I have, and consequently you don't know as much about these copper-skins as I do, do you?"

"I s'pose not—I hadn't oughter, at any rate."

"Well, I can tell you something that may be you don't suspect. There's going to be an Indian war mighty soon."

The agent started from his seat.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. *I know it*, Womple; but you chaps and the other fellows Government sends out here are so thundering blind that you'd never s'pect what was going on till you get a whack over the head from one of their tomahawks. There's Commissioner Dole and some of the others that I think smell as much as two rats."

The agent looked too excited and frightened to speak, and Larkins continued in his mild manner.

"Y-a s, Womple, afore we're many months older there's going to be such a time as neither you nor I never dreamed of. There's a storm coming, and we as understand the weather can see the clouds already gathering in the sky."

"But tell me all about it."

"You'n I have had several friendly dealings together; and, as you always acted the honest part, that is, helped me make

few thousand out of the Sioux, he! he! he! I feel disposed to let you know, so that you may trim your sails and be ready. Well, then, in the first place, Womple, these Sioux are getting tearing mad. Their annuities have been due for several months, but they don't come. Their Great Father, Old Abe, has got enough to do to take care of Washington, without seeing to his dusky children. Then this treaty is going to kick up another muss. It don't go down very well."

"But dare they do such a thing?"

"Dare they do it? It's one of two things: to be quietly starved to death, or to raise a row and die like a true warrior. Which do you s'pose they're most likely to do?"

There was an indolent, sleepy indifference in the manner of Matt Larkins that was in striking contrast to the excited, anxious manner of the agent. The latter was continually changing his seat, moving his arms, spitting, smoking and drinking, while the trader, with his hat thrown back, and his elbow resting upon the table, was drawing figures with his finger, in the spilled liquor. When he raised his eyes to those of his friend, he did not move his head in the least, and quickly dropped his listless gaze to the motion of his finger.

"Yas, Womple, which be they the most likely to do? There's another thing that's stirred the blood of these Sioux. You know Government has commanded them to stop making war against the Chippewas. That come mighty nearer than many think of kicking up a promiscuous massacre."

"But, Larkins if this is so, hadn't you oughter to tell the people of it? There's a good many poor women and children that will suffer."

"Bah! how many do you s'pose would believe you? These stingy old farmers up through the country will keep plowing and harvesting until they see their buildings on fire, then they'll begin to think something's the matter. Take my advice, Womple, and don't say a word to any one about it. What is it to you, any way? You jist take mighty good care of your own head, and let the others do the same. Hist! there's an Indian jist entered your store. Open the door on a crack and listen to what he buys."

The agent sprang up and opened the door, and peered through. A huge savage stood before the counter. Although

a warm day, he was wrapped to his chin in a large blanket. His long, black, wiry hair hung down over his head and face and he had a sullen, treacherous look, that might well have aroused suspicion in a person unacquainted with him.

"The fellow has got a gun and hatchet, of course, but see what it is he is after," whispered Larkins.

The first thing for which the savage asked was a knife. After considerable dallying this was purchased and he then wished to look at the hatchets. A large, sharp-bladed one was selected, after which he took a quantity of percussion caps, lead and powder. Rather singularly he paid the price asked for them in good legal greenbacks.

"Where did he get them?" asked Larkins, when the savage had departed, and his clerk had informed him of the fact. "It ain't often a Sioux gets sight of a greenback, and Billson says he had several more in his pouch."

"Maybe some white man has been fool enough to pay him his debts. It's just as likely, however, he's knocked over some person he's found traveling atween the settlements or stations, and confiscated his pocket-book."

"I've never seen that fellow, and it's likely he's come from a considerable distance. I don't like his looks at all."

"Did you ever see a Chippewa or Sioux that suited you in his looks? If you have, you've seen more than I have. You may make up your mind, Womple, there is going to be a good many other faces that you won't like to see afore long."

"Larkins, you've made me right down uneasy. I feel like emigrating back agin."

"He! he! he! Fudge! just haul in your horns and lay low till the storm blows over. When you see it coming, just make yourself skearce fur awhile."

"What are you going to do?"

"Nothing pertickler. I shall take a snooze till they're done hacking and cutting, and then come out and go to selling my beverage agin. When the thing is about to commence, I've got a little matter to attend to up toward the Clearing."

"What is it?"

"Never mind; maybe you'll learn one of these days; if you don't there's no difference. I thought I'd drop and give you the warning. You may take it for what it's worth."

"I've took it already. I'll warrant you I won't sleep very sound o' nights for some time to come."

"Pooh! it's very little it'll disturb me. Well, Womple, I must be off."

So saying, the whisky-trader passed out through the storehouse and disappeared. As he moved away, he muttered and talked to himself as though there were some important scheme revolving in his mind. It may be safely doubted, however, whether his thoughts were more intently occupied than those of the agent and trader that he had left behind him.

CHAPTER III.

A VISITOR.

We felt that we were fellow-men;
We felt we were a band
Sustained here in the wilderness
By Heaven's upholding hand.—W. D. GALLAGHER.

"Poor Mugalwah," repeated the missionary, as he arose from his feet and saw that the savage had really departed. "It has been a sore struggle with him, and I much fear the Spirit of God has not come off conqueror. Never mind, daughter, we are all in the hands of our Father, and he will work his good will with this Indian."

"How fortunate indeed it is that there are no settlements in the vicinity of our little village; these warriors would not fail to attack them this night."

"I suspect that Little Crow, or some of the chiefs, have sent messengers to our village, and have excited them by harangues. They are burning to take up the tomahawk, and I shall not be surprised if on the morrow I find nearly all the warriors gone south to join in the dreadful work."

"And when they return?"

"They will be intoxicated with the sight of blood, and it may be prudent, daughter, for us to hide in the woods for a time."

The girl looked for a moment in the face of her father, and

then, drawing her chair nearer him, buried her head in his lap without uttering a syllable. The missionary passed his hand slowly over the golden hair, as if to soothe the troubled child, who cowered like a frightened bird beneath his arm for protection. Instead of speaking, he began singing in a low, tremulous but sweetly musical voice, a hymn that spoke of trust and faith in the oversight of God. It was sung to the tune of Auld Lang Syne and had always been a favorite with the missionary.

As he sat thus, humming over those cheering words, his eyes resting absently upon the door, the mild autumn afternoon gradually faded into twilight which in turn deepened into evening. Cora had fallen into slumber, and his hand rested upon her head; still he sung, in his modulated voice, the hymn, and the tears slowly trickled down his cheek. Never before had Father Richter enjoyed such a close communion with his Saviour as upon that night in September, when he sat in his own hut and ran back over the past forty years of his life. Never before had he experienced in so tangible, so palpable a form the presence of the blessed Master whom he had served through all those long, eventful years. He sat there and wondered whether it was possible for the world to offer a situation for which he would exchange his own, in spite of the cloud that was lowering over it. No, no, a thousand times no, was the inward answer to the question.

He had sat for nearly three hours in this soothing reverie, and he was all unconscious of the lapse of time, when he was recalled by the sound of a footstep, and a form flitted by the open door. He merely caught a glimpse of it, insufficient in the dim moonlight to reveal the identity of the person.

A moment later, the Indian reappeared, and stepping to the door looked in. As there was no light in the room, and the missionary was in shadow, he failed to discover who was sitting directly in front of him.

"Won't you enter and sit with me awhile?" asked Father Richter, in his mild, persuasive tones. As quick as lightning the form drew back and whisked out of sight.

Father Richter while the Indian was standing before him, had done his utmost to ascertain who it was, but had failed—learning only that it was not Mugalwah.

Becoming sensible now of the lateness of the hour, he gently raised the head of Cora from his lap, and closed the door. As she sat somewhat confused and bewildered, he struck a light.

"It is quite late, daughter—time that you had retired."

The heavy wooden-covered Bible was taken down from the side mantel-piece, a chapter read, and then the evening prayer was offered up. The peculiar circumstances surrounding the two did not make its pleading fervor any greater. It breathed the same unshaken faith and trust, the same unwavering hope, and was as brief as usual.

The house of the missionary was but a story and a half in height—there being a rude loft produced by the shape of the angular roof. Three rooms only were upon the floor, the large sitting and dining-room, and the two bedrooms, occupied respectively by the father and daughter. When travelers remained over night, as they occasionally did, accommodations were made for them in the sitting-room, or if the necessity was great, the loft came into use.

Father Richter had constructed a sort of rude lamp, fed from the fat of animals, which had done him good service for a number of years. With this he escorted his daughter to the bedroom and there kissed her good-night. She had become inspired with the same soothing trust as her father, and scarce a thought of danger crossed her mind, as she sunk into a sweet, dreamless slumber upon her couch.

Meanwhile the excitement among the red-men was on the increase. Their village, which stood several hundred yards from the Clearing, was the scene of earnest dispute. The North American Indian is a strange being, with a nature which it has puzzled many a man to understand. In this little community, among whom Father Richter had administered for twenty years, nearly every adult person had made a profession of Christianity; and, so long as temptation remained away from them, their lives were consistent. But let those infernal pests of society, the whisky-traders, make their appearance in the neighborhood, and the appetites of the men, and some of the women, became uncontrollable. Despite the protestations and threatenings of their teacher, they swallowed the fiery abomination so long as they could obtain it, or as

long as they were capable of holding another drop. And then, like so many helpless brutes, they slept until the effects of their debauch had passed away.

Then, repentant and sorrowful, they besought the forgiveness of God and of the aggrieved missionary for their sin. They prostrated themselves in the very dust, almost starved themselves to death, and crucified their bodies in every manner as a punishment for their transgressions. Even Christian Jim, who, beyond all question, was a sincere follower of the Saviour, was not proof at all times against these temptations.

Then, at rare intervals, came, faintly but distinctly, the sounds of war, and these meek Indians, whether upon the chase, fishing, or at home in their villages, raised their heads and listened. Assuring themselves of the meaning of the sound, the flashing eye, the compressed lip and the quickly-drawn breath showed how deep was the response of their natures to the well-remembered call.

And thus it was, on this Sabbath morning in autumn, when, ordinarily, they were quiet and thoughtful, that they were talkative and excited. The messenger of Little Crow had brought words that were like wind to the slumbering fire. The majority were in favor of starting at once to the southward and joining in the work of destruction of the settlers; but a few, among whom Christian Jim was prominent, endeavored to dissuade them from the step. The controversy was long and earnest, but it effected no good.

A little before midnight a band of some twenty warriors, fully armed and in their war-paint, withdrew from the village, and stealthily entered the wood in a south-easterly direction. A glance at their fiendish faces would have assured any one of their intent. The leading spirit was Mugalwah, who more than once had threatened the life of Christian Jim for opposing his advice so strenuously.

About a mile away, on the banks of a small creek, the party halted, and Mugalwah withdrew deeper into the woods. Fairly away from his companions, he at once turned his face toward the Clearing. He was not long in passing the intervening distance. Carefully avoiding his own village, he came upon the log-house from a different direction. On the very

margin of the Clearing, he paused to contemplate, in the dim moonlight, the scene before him.

As silent as the tomb stood the little home of the missionary. Its outlines were distinctly visible, as was also the humble garden in its rear. The few rows of maize, the spire-like beans, and the dense undergrowth, bespoke a tidy and industrious hand, and the impression of soothing quiet was increased, if possible, by the profound silence that rested upon every thing.

But this picture of contentment was lost upon the erratic being who stood in the edge of the woods. His paint-be-daubed face was disfigured by the expression of frightful ferocity that gleams from the Indian's face when engaged in his inhuman work; and the gentle instructor to whom, for so many years, he had looked up to with reverence, was now transformed into an object of implacable hate.

As noiseless as a phantom, the savage glided across the open space toward the building. A stranger standing upon the edge of the Clearing, would have observed him pass around the corner of the house, where, as he sunk upon his knees, his form dissolved into the deeper shadow of the building itself.

At the recent date of which we are writing, the lucifer match was in use among the Indians who lived in the neighborhood of the border, or who had communication with the whites. Mugalwah was provided with a number of these which he held in his left hand, while he gathered kindlings with his right.

The dexterity with which he collected the twigs, brush and dried leaves and heaped them against the house, might have led any one to suspect that he was an experienced hand at the business. Assuring himself that there could be no miscarriage, he swept his eagle eye over the Clearing to make sure that there were no interlopers, and then he carefully listened to find whether any one was stirring inside.

All was still, and with a steady hand he drew a couple of matches over a distended portion of his hunting-dress. They ignited instantly, and he applied them to the lower portion of the pile. A slight dew had fallen, and there was some delay before the flame communicated. By carefully shading the

blaze, it soon caught and the fire steadily and rapidly increased.

The face of the Indian glowed with a demoniac ecstacy, as he watched the serpentine flame widening and broadening, and realized that in a moment the house of Father Richter must be wrapped in fire.

All at once he started. Something caught his ear. He placed his hand upon his hunting-knife and glanced around him. The sound came from within the building, and was that of the missionary himself. It was low and monotonous, and Mugalwah needed but a moment to assure him that it was the voice of prayer.

From some cause or other, Father Richter found it impossible to sleep upon retiring some time before. Lying in his bed for a couple of hours, he finally arose, dressed, and seated himself in a large chair at the foot of his bed. Here, meditating as was his wont, it was not unnatural for him after a time to sink upon his knees and commune in prayer with his Maker. All unconscious of the danger which so imminently threatened him, the principal subject of his petition was the very being, who, at that moment, was encompassing him and his daughter with a horrid death.

Mugalwah heard his name pronounced and he listened more intently than ever. The prayer was in the Indian tongue, so that he understood every word. What a study the face of that savage offered, as it was lit up by the flaming twigs in front of him. His soul was stirred to its innermost depths and a mighty struggle for a few seconds took place in his breast.

Meanwhile the blaze was increasing. Already the corners of the dry, seasoned logs were beginning to smoke and to give evidence of dangerous heat. Still the low voice of prayer was heard, and still the name of Mugalwah was offered before the Throne of Grace. The Indian bent his head still lower and listened. Like an aroused lion he sprung to his feet and leaping upon the burning twigs scattered them far and near. Pausing only long enough to assure himself that there was no possible danger to the building, he ran across the Clearing at the top of his speed and plunged into the wood and disappeared.

It seemed as if that Clearing was to be the scene of more than one singular occurrence upon that autumn night. It was scarcely twenty minutes after the departure of the savage, when another form, clothed in the dress of a white man, issued from the wood at almost the same point that he had entered, and strode across the Clearing in the direction of the cabin. Reaching the door, he rapped upon it with a force that might have been heard at a considerable distance.

Father Richter had not yet retired, and he answered the summons almost immediately, pausing, however, long enough to light his lamp. As he opened the door, his eyes fell upon the smiling face of a young man attired in the garb of a hunter, holding a rifle in his left hand while he extended his right to grasp that of the missionary.

Their manner was such as to show that they had met before, but under circumstances that one might suspect were not altogether of an agreeable nature. There was a restraint about the young man, and his smile was forced, as though he were in doubt about the reception that awaited him. Father Richter took a second penetrating glance to assure himself there was no mistake, and then he half drew back as though to close the door. The young man noticed it and recoiled a step.

"Am I not welcome, Father Richter?"

"Come in, for you are in more danger than you suspect; but, Roderick, you are the last man I expected to see, and I will not take a lie upon myself by saying that I am glad to see you; but I turn no man from my door, much less one of my own blood."

It is a mournful fact regarding this fallen nature of ours, that there are very few beings who have attained to anywhere near perfection, in a moral point of view, without having some particular failing; or, to express our meaning by figure, scarcely any man can so protect and fortify himself, but there will be some weak spot that he has overlooked, where the great adversary obtains almost undisputed entrance.

A person might have lived for years with old Father Richter, and never found any thing which was not to be admired; and yet, between him and young Roderick Charnly, a slight

occurrence of a few years before had placed a chasm over which neither could pass. The missionary wished the man no harm; he only asked that Providence might keep them separated. He had no desire to see nor to hear any thing regarding him. After the decided rebuff he had given him about a year before, he made himself believe that the young hunter would encamp anywhere in the woods rather than approach the Clearing. But on this autumn night, when, of all others, he should have been hundreds of miles away from the infuriated Minnesota Indians, he had made his way through the wilderness to a spot within a hundred yards of the very beings who would have torn him to pieces had they known of his presence. He had made his way to this point, we say, when he knew that, at the most, a dubious welcome only awaited him.

"I remain with you but a short time," said he, in answer to the remark of the missionary; "so, Father Richter, please make no reference to that unhappy matter which has placed such a distance between us."

The two seated themselves as if for a long conversation.

"And what, Roderick, may I inquire, is the cause of this unexpected visit upon your part?"

"I came to inform you of a dreadful danger that hangs over your head. A massacre has broken out in Minnesota, which, under the direction of Little Crow, Little Priest, Little Six, White Dog, and many other leaders, is spreading through the different agencies—the Upper and Lower Reservation. In short, Father Richer, the entire range of settlements west of St. Paul are considered in danger of destruction. Fearing that you might not be aware of this, I have made my way from Red River to inform you."

"I am grateful for the interest you have thus manifested, but did you really imagine that the ignorant people who surround me, and among whom I have resided for so many years, could ever be induced to raise their hand against me or mine?"

"I hope not, Father Richter, but you must not forget that other savages are in reach of you. The missionaries Riggs and Williamson have been compelled to flee for their lives, and if they are in danger why may not you be?"

There was a lingering sarcasm in this question as if the young man would reprove this implied assumption of superior influence among the Indians. His words impressed the old man very strongly.

"They have been driven from their homes!" he repeated. "I hardly believed the Sioux would have sought to harm them, exasperated as they may be against the whites."

"These aborigines that are so lauded by sentimental poets and romance writers are a treacherous and bloody-minded race."

"They are a people who have been grievously wronged by the whites. What can you expect from them, when such wicked agents are appointed by Government, and when such dishonest traders grow rich from these poor, starving red-men?"

"There is truth in what you say, and I suppose it will always be so. I did not apprehend much peril to you from the immediate people around, but there are others, many of whom are now engaged in this devilish work, who know of you, and may take it into their heads to pay you a visit. The distance is not too great, Father Richter, for such a thing to occur."

"I am aware of that, and also learned yesterday from Awashk, or Christian Jim, as he is more generally known, of the outbreak. Years ago I fled through the woods to escape the fury of these Indians; but I am too old to do that now. I can labor but a few years at most and it matters little when I am called away. My apprehension only is for Cora."

"Why not flee to the land of civilization and spend your old days in comfort and quiet?"

"No, no; I have dwelt too long in these solitudes to make a residence endurable in the States. Should the necessity of saving Cora's life compel me to leave this Clearing, I shall go deeper into the woods—farther away from the abode of white men; but it will be a regard only for the welfare of my cherished daughter that can drive me to such a step."

The young man was silent for a moment, and then he asked:

"Father Richter, are you aware of the fearful character of this outbreak?"

"I can well imagine what it is. I have seen the Indian in all moods, and understand what he is when wrong and persecution have aroused his fiercer nature within him. Many an innocent mother and child must fall before the tomahawk and knife, while the truly guilty escape. Ah me, it is sad, sad."

"The war makes such a drain upon our men that I am afraid there will be difficulty in sending a sufficient force to quell this insurrection which is of such considerable extent."

"Unless Government appoints Christian or at least honest agents, it will require a standing army to afford protection to the emigrants who venture into the north-west. Do not misunderstand me, Roderick; this is a subject upon which I feel deeply. I would that I could reach the ear of the authorities for a few moments. This outbreak must be put down, as it undoubtedly will in the course of a few weeks, but what assurance can you have that the same thing will not be repeated?"

"A wholesome hanging of two or three hundred of the leading spirits, I think, would have a good effect upon those who are left."

"It might so long as the terror inspired by such murders lasted; but if you think such a course could paralyze the arm of every red-man you are as seriously mistaken as you were in that matter a few years ago."

The scarlet suffused the face of the young man and a sharp reply rose to his lips; but, recalling his position, he checked himself and sat for a moment in silence. He felt that the difference between himself and Father Richter was irreconcilable, and it became him to avoid all reference to the matter. As if recollecting himself, the missionary said:

"You must pardon me, Roderick, that I have not asked you to eat. You will partake of something?"

"I thank you; I have no appetite, and the hour is too far advanced already."

"Did you observe any thing unusual as you approached the Clearing?"

"There was nothing in the immediate vicinity of your cabin that I noticed; but I had a very narrow escape upon the bank of the creek a mile or so away."

"How?"

"I had no thought of meeting any one, and came upon a party of Indians that seemed upon the point of crossing. It was almost a miracle that I did not run directly into their clutches. It may be that I should have suffered no harm, as they were your people."

"They would have made short work with you, Roderick, their blood is fairly aroused, and the face of a white person, excepting perhaps Cora and myself, would drive them to frenzy. If you saw a party of my people, they were on their way to take part in the massacre. I wonder much at your venturing here at this time."

"I was greatly concerned for your safety."

The hunter saw that his words were only half believed, and he regretted having uttered them. He was so nettled at the manner of his host that he rose abruptly.

"Well, good-by, Father Richter. I hope the time may come when you will think better of me than you do now."

"Roderick, I think no ill of you—God knows I think ill of no man; but I believe that it would be better for both of us that we should meet no more in this world. You understand my feeling toward you. When you leave me, let it be with the understanding that *you have made your last visit!*"

"I promise you never to darken your doors again."

"But hold; yonder, I see, the day is breaking. You can not leave my house until to-morrow evening. You would never get a mile beyond the Clearing."

"I have not lived for many years in the wilderness; but I have lived there long enough to be able to take care of myself," replied the young hunter with a slight tinge of haughtiness in his manner, as he lifted his rifle from where it had reposed against the side of the room, and made a motion toward the door. The only reply of Father Richter was to draw him one side and point through the small open window. Following the direction of his finger, Roderick Charnley discovered an Indian and two squaws making their way across the Clearing.

"The village is already astir, and you would be detected in an instant."

"It would not be the first time, I have been detected," replied the young man, still making as though to depart.

"Roderick," commanded the missionary, in his impressive and earnest manner, as he laid his hand upon his shoulder "should you depart from my house before the coming darkness, your blood would be upon my head. You must obey me. Keep yourself carefully concealed from view through the day, and at night I shall then bid you good speed upon your way. You are weary; pass into my own room, and rest yourself until you are called."

The hunter obeyed as if he were a child; and, as the door was closed behind him, Father Richter seated himself in his chair, to spend an hour in meditation and prayer.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WAR-PARTY.

The white
Demon of greed, and rum, and treachery,
Is on their heels for terror or despatch.

WILLIAM ROSS WALLACE.

THE band of Indians that left the village and halted upon the banks of the creek were not quite twenty in number. Having chosen Mugalwah as their leader, they awaited his return without questioning. In the course of an hour or so, he made his appearance and they resumed their journey toward the south-east. When the sun came up over the wilderness they had traversed many a mile.

Down in a valley-like depression, they made a second halt, which was intended to be of but a few minutes' duration. They were now getting in the neighborhood of the extreme north-western limit of civilization, and were liable to come upon prey almost at any instant. Their encampment was on a broad prairie, over which they had an extended view of several miles. As the party seated themselves upon the grass, Mugalwah ascended a slight elevation and looked around in every portion of the horizon.

Away to the eastward, his keen eye detected something unusual, but the distance was so great that its precise identity could not be ascertained, even with all his wonderful acumen.

Whatever the objects were, it was manifest they were approaching, and could soon be distinguished. At length he made out that they were a party of women and children progressing wearily forward. The wily Sioux more than suspected that the massacre had something to do with their presence at this unusual hour upon the prairie.

Retreating into the hollow, he warned his companions by an ejaculation that something was in the wind, and then dropping upon his knees, he crept to the top of the hill and peered over the summit.

The party of refugees numbered six women and eight children, three of whom were infants at the breast. The garments of the parents were soiled and torn, their hair disheveled, and their arms and ankles bleeding from their hurried flight through the bushes and briers. The children were all bare-headed, and considerable as was their distance, the savages plainly heard their cries of distress.

The Sioux could have rushed over the prairie and swooped down upon the little party, if they chose; but the American Indian always prefers to draw his prey into ambush, and so they quietly awaited the approach of the refugees.

A tall column of smoke in the eastern horizon, that ascended straight into the sky, perhaps hastened the flight of the little party; but it was full an hour before they approached within a hundred yards of where the Sioux, glaring and malignant, lay awaiting them. Here, as if wearied beyond endurance, they sunk upon the earth, and endeavored to quiet their children.

One little fellow, some six or eight years of age, seemed to bear the fatigue better than the others; for, instead of resting himself, he commenced running hither and yon, and finally approached the hollow which concealed the savages. Laughing and chattering to himself, and calling to his exhausted companions to join him, he suddenly halted within a dozen feet of the Sioux. As he saw the painted, ferocious faces turned toward him, he was transfixed with terror for a moment, and then with a gasp of fear started to fly.

The crouching Mugalwah shot like a ball from the earth, and catching the boy in one arm, bore him to the ground with the quickness of lightning. He was feeling for his knife with

which to dispatch him, when the mother, who had seen the occurrence, uttered a scream of agony and rushed forward to the protection of her offspring. This served to distract the attention of Mugalwah, who released the struggling boy, and he and his followers arose in a group and approached the fugitives.

Now ensued a scene that almost baffles description. The women fell upon their knees in despair, imploring that their children might be spared; the latter, almost frantic with fear, clung to their garments and refused to be quieted; while the Indians, dark and sullen, stood calmly contemplating them. The little fellow who had escaped the clutches of Mugalwah, instead of remaining with his friends, continued running over the prairie until he had gone several hundred yards, when he sat down upon the ground and began sobbing as if his heart were broken.

Beyond a doubt, the refugees would have suffered the most barbarous outrage, and the entire party would have been put to death, had it not been for an unlooked-for occurrence. More than one savage was toying with the handle of his knife, impatient for the signal from their leader, when an exclamation from one of their number turned all eyes to the southward. A party of horsemen were seen approaching at a rapid rate, as if intent on charging the savages. A quick motion of Mugalwah's hand, and every one of his followers vanished back into the hollow, and dropped upon their faces, where, as before, they were invisible.

A rapid, searching glance of the Sioux, showed him that the cavalry were too numerous for his party to engage. Had his own men been mounted, he might have been tempted to a brush with them; but, as it was, stratagem could only save them from utter annihilation.

Stepping forward so as to confront the women, Mugalwah said, in his gruff, commanding voice:

"Git up! Ain't going to kill!"

The kneeling women stared as if they failed to comprehend his meaning. He repeated his command in a louder voice than before, whereupon they arose and began thanking and calling down blessings upon his head. The chief checked them peremptorily.

"Yonder come white men—soon be here—take you wid 'em—dey want to kill Sioux—know what I mean?"

The abrupt and difficult speech of the savage, together with the excessive fear of the fugitives, prevented their comprehending his meaning. Finally one of them caught the meaning of his outstretched arm, and saw in the distance the approach of the horsemen.

"Tell dem big lot Sioux down dere, (pointing behind him,) too many for white men to fight—tell dem we let you go—no hurt you—tell dem dat?"

"Yes, yes; we will tell them how very kind you have been to us."

"Tell dem we're twenty—good many—forty down dere, eh?"

"There are not so many of you, are there?"

"Nebber mind—you tell dem dat—don't, Mugalwah tomahawk you!" said the Sioux, making a menacing motion with his tomahawk.

"You must kill me then, for I can not tell a lie, even to save my life."

This heroic courage shot through and through the being of Mugalwah. Like a flash of lightning, conscience sprung up and demanded to be heard. He comprehended, in all its length and breadth, the wicked work upon which he had entered, and for a moment he wavered. The thought of the vows he had taken upon himself; the earnest entreaty of Father Richter; and, more than all, the offended God above, who, at that moment, was gazing down upon him—he thought of these and he wavered. But it was only a moment. With a mighty struggle, he sent conscience, silent and cowering, back to her retreat.

The danger was becoming imminent; he could but respect the firmness of the suffering fugitive, in thus braving death for the sake of truth. It is doubtful what would have been the result of this strange state of affairs, had not one of the other women interposed.

"Mary, you can promise to keep silence, at least, regarding their numbers, can you not?"

"Yes; I suppose so," she answered, hesitatingly, as if in doubt whether even that would be consistent.

"Very well, you have promised that; I will see to the other matter, then. I will tell them what you wish," she added, addressing the savage.

"Tell we're good many—big too much for dem to fight!"

"Yes, yes, of course."

"Kill if don't!"

Mugalwah shot backward as he spoke, and dropped flat upon his face, beside his companions in the hollow. Bringing his rifle to the front of him he peered over the bank, ready to shoot whichever of the fugitives manifested treachery; for, had he been certain it would have insured his own destruction, he would have sped the bullet at her who proved false to him.

The party of horsemen were under the command of Lieutenant ———. They had rendered good service for the last few days in picking up stragglers and chastising over-venture-some parties of savages.

The lieutenant had detected the fugitives at some distance, but neither he nor any of his men knew the correct number of the Indians. Consequently they approached at a cautious pace. The experience of the cavalry in the great civil war had taught them to be careful of those terrible ambushes. Accordingly, at a safe distance, they drew up and awaited the approach of the fugitives.

The latter were not slow to avail themselves of this opportunity. They hurried over the prairie, and in a short time were among the rough but kind-hearted soldiers, who took the women and children upon their horses until all were safely mounted.

The first inquiry of the lieutenant, after emitting a mouthful of tobacco-juice, was regarding the strength and number of the Sioux. The women kept their agreement with Mugalwah, the conscientious Mary maintaining a strict silence, while the other so exaggerated that the officer suspected her perceptions had been distorted by her excessive terror. As it was, however, he concluded the best plan of procedure was to let the Indians alone.

Still, he was loth to take his departure without reconnoitering and exchanging shots with them. Selecting six of his most experienced men, he galloped out upon the prairie and

began describing a circuit around the savages, keeping a sharp eye upon their hiding-place to discern a spot where he might send a piece of led "home," or gather some idea of their true number.

As the lieutenant constantly changed his position, he could detect the moving of the tufted heads, and the black, threatening muzzles of the rifles; and he either fancied or really did see more than one pair of glowing eyeballs fixed upon him and his party. The action of the Sioux said, in effect: "You let us alone, and we will let you alone; but, if you put your finger on us, take care!"

The lieutenant did not put his finger upon them, the principal reason for which being, that the opportunity was not afforded him. Neither he nor any of his party were skillful enough in the use of the rifle to pierce one of those dark spots that occasionally flitted to view, while he knew a volley from that hive could not fail of emptying several of his saddles. Completing the circle, Lieutenant ——— returned to his party, and, striking off to the north-west, they and the fugitives finally disappeared from view.

It was not until they were moving specks in the distance, that Mugalwah and his party arose to their feet again. By this time the forenoon was well advanced. The savages immediately took up their march toward the south-east. As yet, they had shed no blood, and they were burning to take part in the fearful massacre that was then raging.

Several miles in this direction brought them to a small grove of trees, through which ran a brook. Here they halted for the purpose of holding a short consultation and determining their plan of proceedings. They had been here scarcely fifteen minutes, and the chief was busy in speaking, when some one was heard to step in the brook, and, looking up, they all observed Christian Jim.

A frown gathered upon their faces, for they well knew the errand that had brought him hither. One or two grasped their lathets, in their excitement, but they waited to hear his words.

It would be tedious to the reader, were we to narrate the particulars of the interview. Awahnock came at the suggestion of Father Richter, to see whether it were possible to

induce Mugalwah and his party to return from their errand of death. He had some difficulty in securing an audience, but they finally listened and replied to him. In answer to their harangues upon the oppressions and persecutions of the white men, he could only reply by citing the example of the Good Man who was upon the earth many, many long moons ago, and who bore all manner of persecution at the hands of his enemies without murmuring or resistance. He recalled to them the vows they had taken upon themselves, reminding them of their companions who had stayed at home and remained faithful, and upon whom the Great Spirit smiled in pleasure, while he frowned upon them in anger. And lastly, he assured them that the great chief at Washington would certainly repay them for this violation of treaty and law.

The debate for a time was stormy; but the faithful Awahnock was assisted by conscience, and was on the very eve of victory, when an ally of Satan appeared upon the scene in the shape of Matt Larkins, the whisky-trader.

"Hyer's yer prime stuff! The reg'lar distilled dew of the mountains. It'll ile yer j'int's and make you limber as a rag. Shall I stop and let you imbibe, or pass on?"

He had his inevitable keg upon his shoulder, which he deposited upon the ground as he spoke, and folding his arms and seating himself upon it, gazed around upon the company.

Ah! the fire-water, the fire-water! When the highest talent, the most lofty genius, and the most solemn vows among civilized people are no proof against its fearful fascinations, what is to be expected from the poor, ignorant, degraded Indian? Is it any wonder that he bargains gun, tomahawk, ammunition, clothes and food to obtain the maddening draught? Is it strange that he consents to be kicked, beaten, and subjected to all manner of abuse, for the sake of the 'enemy that steals away his brain?"

Producing a tin-cup, the trader nearly filled it and passed it to Mugalwah. He took it greedily and drank every drop.

"Prime stuff, that!" remarked Larkins, as he received the cup again. "None of yer adulterated stuff—made it myself."

He filled the cup again and again, and passed it around until every one had drank except Awahnock. The wily trader knew him well, and had purposely reserved offering him the

cup until the last one, feeling certain that he would not be able to resist the sight of the gurgling fluid. There was a mighty struggle in the breast of the Indian. He silently called upon his father again and again to help him, and when he felt certain that he had the requisite strength, the sight of the fiery liquid made him tremble and doubt again. It was a sore trial, but he triumphed!

"Don't want it!" he replied, emphatically, with a shake of his head.

"You ain't agoin' to tell me you intend to refuse that now, be you? 'Cause if you be, I must tell you I don't believe you. Come, that's only half-full."

"Don't want it, I tell you," replied Awahnock, in a louder voice, still keeping his eye fixed upon the dangerous fluid.

"Just take a taste; then, if you don't like it, you can throw it away. That's what I says."

Awahnock laid his hand upon his knife, and his black eyes flashed fire.

"If you ax me agin—I kill you."

"Oh! all right; it don't make no difference to me, not at all. Do as you darn please; that's my motto."

"Give some more," commanded Mugalwah, in his gruff, peremptory manner.

"Sartinly, sartinly; as long as the supply don't give out, you're welcome to all you can swaller, and I reckon that ain't a *very* small lot, by no means."

The cup went the rounds again. When it came to Awahnock, Larkins did not repeat his offer, for, as the matter already stood, he did not like the glittering light of those dark eyes fixed upon him. The truth was, Matt Larkins came nigher his death that day, in September, 1862, than he had ever before or since. Indian Jim more than once was on the point of sinking his knife in his bosom, and ridding Minnesota forever of one of its most dangerous pests; but he could not really satisfy himself that it was his duty to take the step; consequently he kept his knife in his belt.

The effect of Larkins' compound on the Indians was various. The majority of them simply made fools of themselves, while there were several in whom it seemed to arouse the most malignant portion of their dark natures. They glowered

upon the whisky-trader and upon Awahnock as though meditating their destruction. Sad, indeed, would have been the fate of the hapless fugitive who at that moment fell in their hands.

Mugalwah imbibed most freely, and was the first to come under the influence of the demon. "Want some more drink—good!" he said, endeavoring to fix his unsteady gaze upon the trader.

"All right; help yourself, my Lily of the Woods."

Instead of taking the cup, the maudlin savage got upon his knees and endeavored to drink from the faucet. As might naturally be expected, he made poor work, and, in considerable rage, he rose to his feet again.

"D—n fire-water!" he exclaimed. "Good for nothin'—smash him!" Saying which, he brought his tomahawk with all the force he could summon down upon the keg. The latter was not injured in the least, while the instrument glanced from his hand. Larkins laughed.

"Try that agin'; that ain't the first time it's been cracked over the head. Since the missionary smashed it, some years ago up in the Clearing, I've had the keg covered with double bands of iron, and of you want to exercise your muscle, why just slam away at it."

The next movement by one of the half-intoxicated Indians, was to throw a tomahawk at the whisky-trader himself—it narrowly missing him.

"I ain't double-hooped!" said he, "so, I beg of you, don't throw them kind of missiles at me. They might do harm, you know, and then where would you fellows get whisky from?"

Several others manifested the same dangerous, playful tendency toward Larkins, so that he was constrained to withdraw to a distance of several yards. He was used to such scenes, however, and he knew there was no danger so long as he exercised common prudence. He feared Awahnock more than all the others. He felt if he would only leave there would be no danger to himself, and nothing could prevent him from reaping a very remunerative price for the stuff he had just furnished the Indians. There seemed no disposition upon the part of Jim to take his departure, and the trader had recourse to stratagem to accomplish it.

"There don't seem much chance for more speculation here," he remarked, in a loud voice; "they are pretty well done for, for the present, so I'll leave. I s'pose you stay, Awahnock?"

The Sioux deigned no reply.

"Well, good-night to you."

With this, he lifted the keg, now nearly empty, to his shoulder and moved away. He cast a furtive glance at Jim, but he sat stolid and motionless, and there was no divining his emotions or intentions. His face was as expressionless as stone.

The trader passed outside the grove and again glanced back. To his surprise, Awahnock stood beside him.

"You bad man," said the savage.

"Why so?" asked Larkins, who deemed it wise not to excite his ire.

"Bad man—sell Injin fire-water; he go kill white folks now—cut dere throat."

"Can't help that. I don't make 'em buy the whisky. If they don't like it, all they've got to do is to let it alone. Ain't that fair, Awahnock?"

"Fire-water bad—Injin love him—can't help drink him when white man offer him."

"Well, that's his look-out—not mine. The red-man boasts a great deal of what he does; strikes me he might do enough to master his love for fire-water, if he thinks it doesn't do him any good."

"Fire-water taste good—me like him."

"And that shows your sense. Now, don't be offended, my fine fellow, if I ask you to join me in a swaller. Come, now."

"Like to," said the Sioux, slowly, and with hesitation, as the trader began pouring out the liquid; "but won't!" he exclaimed, springing back a step or two and proudly bringing his form to its full height. "It wicked—Awahnock not touch him."

"All right; just as you please, I says. You've no objection to my drinking your health, I suppose? If not, here goes."

"See yonder," continued the Sioux, pointing back in the

grove, "see what fire-water do—dere be Mugalwah and oder warriors asleep—when wake up dey want more fire-water—can't git 'em—what den dey take?"

"Don't know, I'm sure."

"Blood—take yours if see you."

"Sorry—shouldn't do that ; because it isn't right. Besides, they ought to remember Old Abe will pay 'em for such tricks."

"And *He* pay you for yours," said the Sioux with impressive solemnity, as he pointed upward.

Sad and sorrowful, he wrapped his blanket around him, and turning his back upon his kindred, moved off to the northwest toward the Clearing.

Waiting until he was beyond sight, the whisky-trader returned on tiptoe to the revelers. They were all sound asleep, and he moved among them with an assurance which showed he knew well enough the effect of his potations. Taking a blanket here, a knife there, and occasionally a handsome rifle, he finally satisfied his "conscience" that he had secured a reasonable compensation for his whisky ; and apparently in no wise discommoded by his extra load, he moved out upon the prairie, and, rather curiously, also took a direction toward the Clearing.

CHAPTER V.

THE SHOT.

"Love wakes men once a lifetime each ;
 They lift their heavy heads and look,
 And lo! what one sweet page can teach,
 They read with joy, then shut the book ;
 And some give thanks, and some blaspheme,
 And most forget ; but either way,
 That and the child's unheeded dream,
 Is all the light of all their day."

On the morning succeeding the attempt of Mugalwah to burn the house of the missionary, the latter was seated upon a large flat rock, close by a spring from which he was in the habit of drawing his daily supply of water. The expression of the good man's face would have showed the most casual

observed that he was sadly troubled. It was late in the forenoon, and he had been seated there for more than an hour.

"I have now reached the allotted period of man's life," he mused. "Three score and ten years have bent my form and made my step more feeble than it was when I first came to this region. Forty years of this life have been spent among the poor red children of America. During those forty years I have seen many a chieftain, warrior and maid, gathered to their long home, and how many a dying couch have I helped smooth! There's comfort in that thought. I once entertained the hope that the aboriginal race would become entirely evangelized. The ways of God are mysterious, and it does not become me to say that such is not to be; but, ah! my own people I fear have set the work backward for many a long year."

He dropped his head for a few moments, and then his thoughts recurred to his visitor of the night before.

"It is strange that that man should call upon me. I thought the trouble which occurred between us shut up forever the door of communication. It is singular this dislike I feel toward him, and yet it is impossible to subdue it. I should be loath to confess to another how much I desire his departure, but I really fear I shall drive him from my house when I return."

Again he dropped his head in thought and again he communed with himself.

"He tells me that it was his fear for my safety that sent him hither at this time; but how did he learn that danger threatened me? He belongs to the land of civilization. When this outbreak was not anticipated by more than a moiety of the settlers, is it reasonable to suspect that those hundreds of miles away should have known what was coming? I fear that was a deception of his. I have come here, because I can not bear the sight of him. I left Cora instructions to prepare his breakfast. I know I would starve to death before I would accept food as he does!" added Father Richter, emphatically as he arose to his feet and made his way toward the Clearing.

The distance was comparatively slight, and upon entering the cabin, he was met by Cora, with her usual smile and kiss.

"—Sh!" admonished the missionary, with a warning shake

of his head, "keep a silent tongue, daughter; it would not do for his presence to be suspected. Is he in his room?"

"He is gone!"

"What?" asked the good man in surprise, as he entered and took a seat. "He has not left us?"

"He took his departure a few minutes after you went out."

"I forbade him to stir out until night."

"He said such were your words, but your manner told him to go instantly. He seemed much offended at something you had said, and his last words were to the effect that you would some day regret this."

"I wonder whether he has no regrets for that matter of several years ago. You know, daughter, that your father is not the man to wish any one ill, but I can not help saying it is a great relief to find him gone. My only trouble is that he may be seen by some of the warriors—Heaven! save us!"

The report of a rifle but a short distance away in the woods caused this exclamation, and both father and daughter stopped to the door and looked around on the Clearing, as if they expected to see the explanation of the shot. Ordinarily the report of a gun would have occasioned no remark; but now, when their apprehension was excited, both connected it with Roderick Charnley, and Father Richter, simultaneously with the discharge of the gun, felt a sharp twinge of conscience at the manner in which he treated the young man.

"I trust Roderick is not injured," he said, "but he is encompassed by perils, and should have remained here until nightfall, as I directed. We can pray for him, at any rate."

The two sunk upon their knees, and it may be that Father Richter's petition was somewhat more fervent, because he could not avoid the reflection that he was concerned in the safety of the young man, who a short time before had left his house, and gone forth in the wilderness, where many and many a long mile intervened between him and any point in which he could feel immunity from personal danger.

The missionary passed out in his garden and busied himself, as was his custom, in attending to its duties, while Cora, for a time, occupied herself in her household obligations. These completed, she sauntered forth across the Clearing, taking the same direction as that pursued by her father in the morning.

Arriving at the spring, she slaked her thirst, and then seated herself upon the rock.

It was but natural that the events that had occupied her father's mind should engage hers also. She wondered why his dislike to Roderick Charnley should be so strong, and what it was he had said that should send him off in opposition to his strict commands. She then, with a trembling heart, asked herself whether he had been shot down by one of the Sioux warriors, or whether he was still seeking to make his way through the labyrinth of dangers that had encompassed him. It was but a sisterly affection that she entertained for him, and she, like her parent, wished that he had not come at all.

She was still sitting upon the rock, when her heart was set a-throbbing by the second report of a rifle, so near that she instinctively gazed behind her, certain of discovering the cause of it. The spring was immediately surrounded by shrubbery, while dense woods stretched away on every hand. She saw nothing, however, to explain the meaning of the report, and endeavored to convince herself that it was simply one of the Sioux warriors engaged in hunting.

From some cause or other, the girl began to experience a feeling of uneasiness, as though some vague and unseen peril was at hand!—and she caught herself more than once casting furtive glances around, as if half expecting its approach.

While in this nervous, apprehensive state of mind, Cora suddenly heard the rustling of leaves, and the next moment Roderick Charnley came running at the top of his speed across the path. His hat was gone, and he was panting as though almost exhausted. He trailed his rifle in his right hand and continually looked backward, as if pursued by some foe.

Cora's eyes were still fixed upon his movements with a sort of fascination that seemingly would not be overcome, when she observed him suddenly halt, bring his rifle to his shoulder, and discharge it almost instantly. A ringing yell proved that its effect had been as fatal as the marksman could have wished.

Standing where he had halted, Roderick Charnley commenced reloading his gun with all rapidity possible. His

manner showed that he did not judge himself free from danger. Still, there were no signs of any pursuer, and, gazing about him in every direction, his eyes suddenly rested upon Cora, sitting by the spring.

"Why, how came you here?" he suddenly asked, with a half-smile, as he approached and seated himself, keeping a sharp look-out as he did so for the appearance of an enemy.

"I frequently come here when the weather is pleasant," said the girl, "and have spent many an hour upon this rock; but have you been injured?"

"Not in the least, although two of the red villains took a dead aim at me."

"And you have just slain one?"

"Unfortunately, but one. How thankful I should be if they had only been accommodating enough to have got themselves in range at the time I pulled trigger."

"And where is the other Indian now?"

"That's what I am very anxious to know," returned Roderick, raising his head, and glancing uneasily around him. "He disappeared some distance back, and when I got this fellow far enough away from him to make it a safe thing, I just turned and gave him the compliments of my gun."

"He is likely to appear at any moment, then?"

"Yes, I really suppose he is; but it struck me from his manner that he gave up the hunt and left his companion to keep it up himself. It strikes me he has given it up, also."

"Roderick, this jesting is unseemly over such a solemn matter. You have narrowly escaped death yourself, and have just taken the life of a human being—"

"Was it not justifiable?"

"It was, I suppose, but the levity you display is not justifiable."

Cora Richter, with no companion since infancy, except her father, had imbibed, in a great measure, his *mind*, so to speak. He had graduated brilliantly at college, and had carried his library to his wilderness home with him. It had been twice burned, and he had as often replenished it. The contents of this library were almost as familiar to the daughter as to the father. Their situation was such that there was necessarily a great deal of leisure time upon their hands. This the

missionary delighted to employ in the instruction of his beloved child, and she, being naturally bright and clear-minded, fully rewarded the labors thus bestowed upon her. Civilized society could boast of few better-educated daughters than her, although there might be many of more refined and courtly manners.

Occupying somewhat of the same position as her father, that is, of teacher and guide to the rude, ignorant people around her, she unconsciously acquired, at times, a manner plainly intimating superiority upon her own part and bordering upon the dictatorial in her communication with those of her own kindred. Isolated as was her position in the extreme north-west of Minnesota, seldom a season had passed for the last dozen years, in which their cabin had not been visited by hunters, travelers and others. On one occasion only had Cora Richter seen a white person of her own sex in these wilds. A party of travelers once passed through that section, one of whom had his wife and daughter with him. They remained one night at their house, and it was a memorable occasion to the girl. Since then she had visited St. Paul and one or two other places, where she was placed for a time in communication with young friends. Roderick Charnley was an old acquaintance, and she met him upon such terms.

"Yes," she continued, "I think such lightness altogether out of place. But tell me how it was you escaped."

"I hardly know myself; it must have been because the Sioux were bad marksmen. Shortly after leaving your home, I seated myself upon a fallen tree, to meditate awhile on the best thing to be done, when crack went a gun, and *whiz* went the bullet within an inch or two of my face. I sprung up as I saw a couple of your valiant red-men had determined upon getting my scalp, beyond a doubt. As it was pretty certain there was another gun to be discharged, and they could both land me at running, I hurried behind a tree for shelter. That was all well enough for a while, but it happened they understood their business better than I did. So long as they both kept in front of me, it didn't matter; but they separated and began to maneuver right away, so that one might get behind me, when you will allow it would have been a very difficult matter to have dodged both their rifles. I stood it as long

as I could ; but, it was plain enough what it was coming to, as I broke and ran—”

“ For our house ? ”

“ No, ma'am ; I would have been shot down first. I broke and ran so as to get out of their reach. From some cause that I can't understand, only one of them followed me—you know the rest.”

“ Do you think this vicinity a safe place for you ? ”

“ I think no place is this side of St. Paul. This is not the first Indian nor the first Sioux that has fallen by my hand, and I have no doubt Little Crow would be very glad to obtain my head.”

“ You can go north into Hudson's Bay Territory, where you are safe from every tribe.”

“ I know that ; but I don't feel disposed to go on British soil for safety.”

“ I can not say you are welcome with us, for you know father wishes you away ; but he was much surprised and very uneasy when he returned and found you gone. He could not rest until he had offered up a prayer for your safety.”

“ I thank him for that ; but should have thanked him still more if he had not driven me from his home ! ”

“ Roderick ! ” interrupted Cora, with a quiet indignation, “ speak not in that manner. You have known for years that he entertained no good opinion of you, yet, when he was really convinced that your life was in danger, was he not anxious to keep you concealed from these people until all danger had passed ? And, whether you thank him or your Heavenly Father, it seems his prayer was answered.”

“ It was, indeed,” returned the hunter, in a subdued voice ; “ but, Cora, is not this dislike which he entertains toward me unjust ? Have I done any thing to merit it ? ”

“ Whether you have or not, I can not say, as I have never known all the circumstances. You must settle the matter with your own conscience. But I am certain that my dear father could form no opinion upon any thing unless he had good grounds for doing so. He has never told me what occurred between you and him, and I suppose it will always remain a secret.”

“ It was nothing, Cora, but—”

"What he has refused to reveal of his own free will, I do not desire to hear," interrupted the girl, with a dignity that made Rodrick Charnley ashamed of himself, and filled him with admiration for her who had uttered it. "If you call it a trivial thing, it is surely not worth the relating."

The hunter was silent for a while. Finally he spoke:

"Cora, it is three years since we last saw each other, I believe, is it not?"

"I think it is, although I have never calculated the time."

"And have you never once thought of me during that time?"

The girl turned upon the man as though she did not understand him.

"Have I never once thought of you? What do you mean, Rodrick, by asking such a question?"

"I mean as I speak. Have I been absent from your mind all the time since we met in Missouri, two years ago?"

"Well, no," replied Cora, with a slight blush; "there are very few people whom I have met that I do not think of afterward. Our meeting has been called to mind several times."

"With feelings of pleasure, or regret?"

"Regret."

"I am sorry. I am sure nothing occurred between us."

"Between you and my father there is a secret, which, if not known to me, does not concern me the less. All differences between you and him must be regarded as between you and me."

"But, Cora," pleaded the hunter, fervently. "There is a matter, trifling in itself, that stands between your father and me. It is trifling, I assure you; you will not let me tell you what it is, and yet you place me outside the ban of friendship—"

"You are mistaken; I do not."

"It is just the same; you entertain his suspicion and mistrust."

"I have already told you, Rodrick, that there must be grounds for whatever feelings he holds against you. Until he chooses to explain the matter to me, I must keep the same opinion as he."

There was silence for a few moments, and then, fearing

she had spoken too strongly to the hunter by her side, Cora turned toward him, and said, in a low voice :

"You must not feel hurt at what I have said. This matter, speaking truly, is a bar between us, but it does not prevent me from entertaining the best of feelings toward you. I wish you all good fortune, and when the time comes, if ever it does, for explaining this mystery, I trust that the strongest friendship will spring up between you and father."

"I fear not—I fear not; but I thank you for your words. You know your father is a man of very strong feelings, and when he becomes set in a belief, it is hard to change."

"Truth, I think, will do it, nevertheless," said Cora, with an arch, meaning look toward Roderick Charnley.

"That should have done it, then, long ago."

She shook her head incredulously.

"Have you not read that time will do justice to all? You asked whether I had called you to mind since we become acquainted in St. Louis. May I ask you whether the interview ever came before you, during the past three years?"

Ah! that was a question Roderick Charnley delighted to answer. Accordingly, he hastened to make reply :

"I doubt whether a day has passed in which I have not thought of you. And again and again have I wished (oh! how ardently) that that interview might be repeated. Had I known your father better, had I known myself better, this unhappy difference had never occurred."

"You seem enthusiastic over it!"

"I am not enthusiastic, but earnest; and you will believe that I am truthful when I tell you that more than half of those two years has been spent in the wilderness of the Northwest."

It was Cora's turn to be astonished, and as she turned her face upon the hunter it expressed her amazement stronger than mere words could have done.

"Yes, such is the truth. Winter before last, I remained with a party of hunters in the mountains just beyond you. They visited the Clearing several times, as you remember, no doubt, while I stayed behind, over by the brook, awaiting their return."

"And why did they never speak of you?"

"Because they were enjoined not to do so. I spent the entire winter with them, for no other reason than to be near you."

"How foolish!"

"No doubt it was; but I am frank to confess it. I saw you many and many a time when you little suspected my proximity. And most of the present summer has been spent in Minnesota."

"Not in this neighborhood, truly?"

"Not many miles from here. If you examine the ground near that tree yonder, you will find a hollow worn by my feet while standing and watching you."

"What a fool! if I must speak plainly."

Roderick laughed, and continued:

"I have stood there many and many an hour, as you sat upon this rock, reading or knitting. I have watched the play of the expression upon your face as you were thus engaged; and, when you started homeward, I kept my eyes fixed upon your form as far as it was visible. I have even followed you to the edge of the Clearing, and seen you enter the house."

"And I never once thinking of you."

"I suppose not. Last summer, when your people were friendly toward us, did not Mugalwah give you an account of several excursions he made with a hunter some miles to the north, by the side of a small lake?"

"I remember very well his speaking to my father about it; but he called him—let me think—Walton, no, Waltham, some such name as that."

"You do not think I would give my own name, Roderick Charnley, to him, to bring down to your father? I was that hunter, and well known to most of the Sioux in the village yonder."

"But you know they are now engaged against the whites, and they would not be friendly toward you, even."

"Have I not had sufficient proof of that? I am pretty certain that the one who fired at me, and the one whom I fired at, knew me very well."

"Can it be? What surprise your narrative has caused me, Roderick. You have spent the greater part of three years in

this wild country. You gave up all the comforts of civilization and of home for—”

“For the purpose of being near you—content all the while if I only saw you, without even exchanging a single word with you.”

“It is unaccountable to me.”

“I did it all, Cora,” said the hunter, unconsciously lowering his voice, “because I could have no peace away from you. I went home several times and endeavored to forget it all in the care and whirl of business; I went as a private in the three months’ volunteers; but, on my return home, it seemed the feeling was stronger than ever within me.”

“If you saw me alone so frequently, why did you not speak to me and make yourself known?”

“Because, it would have displeased your father to know that I met you by stealth. I resolved to come openly, or not come at all.”

“Why then did you wait so long?”

“No sufficient pretext offered, until I learned that the great massacre had begun along the frontier. I believed then that I might venture to meet your father; but, even that was not a good excuse in his mind for my introducing myself.”

“Could he have known that *that* alone was the reason, do you suppose you could have been unwelcome? You have avowed the real truth to me, and it may be that my father has had sufficient penetration to discover it for himself.”

“I suspected that he saw through me, when he opened the door and I stood before him.”

“That has been it, undoubtedly, and why should you feel aggrieved when he acts according to his belief?”

“I suppose I should not, although it did touch me.”

“The forenoon is now getting quite advanced, and he must expect my return. We have had quite an extended conversation.”

“Before you go, allow me to say one thing, Cora.”

She had arisen, but awaited his words.

“You believe all that I have told you?”

“Certainly, Roderick, why should I disbelieve you?”

“Are you not convinced that my feeling toward you is of the purest nature; that my love—”

Roderick Charnley uttered a sharp exclamation, threw up his arms and rolled backward from the rock, before Cora was fairly conscious that the deep silence of the woods had been broken by the crack of a Sioux rifle!

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEPARTURE.

Their counsels might be hard to reconcile,
 They might not suit the moment or the spot;
 She rose and laid her work aside the while,
 Down in the sunshine of that grassy plot:
 She looked upon him with an almost smile,
 And held to him a hand that faltered not;
 One moment—bird and brook went warbling on:
 And the wind sighed again, and he was gone.

JEAN INGELow.

THE report of the rifle, the smothered exclamation and fall of the young hunter, were so sudden and so nearly simultaneous, that Cora for a moment failed to realize what had occurred. Then, as she noted the struggling form of Roderick Charnley, that a few seconds before was so instinct with life and animation, a deadly heart-sickness came over her, and reeling like an intoxicated person, she sunk to the earth.

In this half-unconscious condition she did not lose her cognizance of events passing around. She did not fail to hear the exultant shout of the murderous Indian, nor his eager, triumphant tread as he hurried forward to tear the reeking trophy from the head of his victim. Scarcely a dozen feet behind him strode the wrathful missionary, who, with a brow of thunder, caught the Sioux by the shoulder, and flung him backward.

"Wretch! is that the lesson I have taught thee?" he demanded, centering his burning gaze upon the cowering savage. "Lend a hand and help undo this foul murder!"

The Indian stood irresolute, and the baleful glitter of his snakish eyes, and the twitching of his grasp upon the buck-horn handle of his knife, showed that he was yet by no means subdued. Father Richter noted it, and fixing his keen, metal-

like blue eyes upon those of the savage, he repeated, in his slow, impressive tones :

"This man is yet living and may be saved. Help me carry him to the house, and may the Lord pardon you for this day's work. Come, lose no time, assist me here !"

The Sioux stepped forward, obedient as a child, and the two lifted the form of Roderick Charnley from the ground. He had ceased to struggle, his face was of ashy paleness, and the left side of his chest was covered with blood. Cora having fully recovered, walked beside them to the edge of the Clearing. She observed the cautious manner of her father, and when he halted still in the wood, she understood the cause. "We must not be seen by any one," said he. "Run ahead, daughter, and learn whether there be any one in the house, or near enough for us to be observed when we approach it. Should there be any one, you must manage to get him away without delay."

Cora hurried across the Clearing, and pushed open the door of their humble home. To her dismay, she found an elderly Indian woman seated in it, awaiting the approach of her father. The girl could not forbear a start and suppressed exclamation as she observed the squaw, quietly smoking her pipe.

"Did I frighten you?" queried the latter, using the Sioux tongue.

"You did a little, aunty, for I was not expecting to find any one. How long have you been here?"

"A good hour. I have searched for the Father but can not find him. Know you where he is gone?"

"I suppose he is in the woods; he goes there frequent'y, you know."

"Yes; but it is almost time for him to eat, and he can not remain much longer away. I think I will remain here until he returns."

"Perhaps you would do better by coming after dinner. He sometimes remains a good while in the woods."

"But, I am not hurried; I can wait for him. I am sorely troubled. Mugulwah led away Auquanon and Sammuman with him to the southward, and I know not that they will come back to me. I wish him to ask the Good Spirit to watch over them."

The two savages mentioned by the woman were her sons. As they had gone to participate in the massacre, she was naturally anxious concerning them. In her trouble, she came to the missionary. The consciousness that the young hunter was most probably dying, made Cora exceedingly nervous.

"But, aunty, you must pray for them yourself."

"Can't pray so good as Father can. The Great Spirit likes to hear him pray, and will listen to what he says."

"He did all he could to prevent Auguanon and Summuman from going. If they disobey him and run into danger, I do not know as he ought to pray for them."

This remark, without any intention upon the part of her who uttered it, accomplished the very result for which Cora was so ardently hoping. The squaw ejected very spitefully a mouthful of tobacco smoke, and arose from her seat, in a pique, to leave.

"Come again, aunty," said Cora; "Father will be glad to talk with you."

The Indian said nothing, but departed at a rapid pace. The young woman held her hand over her throbbing heart for a few moments, and then hurried across the Clearing, glancing furtively behind her to make sure that she was not observed.

The hunter lay upon the ground, pale and weak, nigh unto death. The missionary had bandaged his wound, and the Indian stood a silent observer. Within reach of Father Richter's voice and eye he was as docile as could be desired.

"Is all ready?" inquired the former, in a whisper.

"Yes; there was one present, but she has gone."

"Proceed, and see that no one comes up unobserved."

Slowly and carefully they bore him across the Clearing, into the cabin, and upon the bed. Then turning to the savage, Father Richter said:

"Your hand has already done enough evil; seek to atone for it, by asking forgiveness for what you have done, and by saying nothing to any one of what has occurred. Do you promise?"

The Sioux signified as much by an inclination of the head.

"Then, do not forget it."

The long residence of the missionary among the Indians had taught him a knowledge of the medicinal qualities of

numerous herbs. In a short time, he had his charge as comfortable as possible. He found his wound, though dangerous, not necessarily mortal. Strict quiet and good nursing assisted by a naturally vigorous constitution, most probably would place him upon his feet again in a short time. First satisfying himself that nothing more could be done for his patient, he partially closed the door and motioned for Cora to seat herself beside him. Placing his hand affectionately upon her head, he spoke in subdued tones as if fearful that other ears might hear what he had to say.

"My daughter, there has been more than one severe trial for me to undergo during the past day or two."

"I know you have suffered a great deal, but you have learned resignation long ago, have you not?"

"I humbly trust so; but, there is one cup which I pray may pass from me."

"Tell me what it is, dear father."

"I was wondering some time ago at your protracted absence, and set out in quest of you. I turned my steps toward the spring, and there discovered you in conversation with Roderick Charley, the last man I hoped to see in this vicinity. You told me this morning that he had departed. Did you believe such to be the case?"

The pale, silent, reproachful face, the round, full, wondering eye and quivering lip, went to the heart of the parent. Drawing the head upon his lap, he said:

"God and you forgive me for once in my life suspecting your truthfulness, Cora; but, you do not know how I have suffered. Did he then mean to deceive me?"

"I am sure he did not." And, thereupon, the daughter proceeded to give an account of the adventure that had befallen the hunter that forenoon, as related by himself, omitting, as a matter of course, the remaining important information that he had vouchsafed.

"I am greatly relieved, for I could not avoid troublous thoughts when I saw you in such familiar converse. You knew my feeling toward him, and it was not possible you could use deception toward me."

"It can not be that you ever thought so."

"That was a treacherous act of the Indian, and a ~~mad~~

narrow escape for Charnley. I wonder much that he ever lived a moment after it."

"I think he repents the deed."

"I have no doubt of it. Should he betray the secret, I fear there will be little probability of our cabin standing another hour. The feelings of the Sioux are very much excited, and did they suspect we harbored any of the whites, it is doubtful if they spare us."

"It will be quite a venturesome task for us to screen him from them for any length of time. Suppose he should become delirious?"

"Not the slightest possibility. It need not be a difficult task. On Sunday afternoons we shall always have visitors, but you can remain in the room at such times, so that what little noise may necessarily be made shall be attributed to your agency. Remember one thing, Cora, he is *my* patient. I attend to him, except at such times as it is absolutely impossible. I wish you to entertain no conversation with him, and I charge you particularly to remember one thing: you are never to allow the least reference upon his part to this—this—difference—this secret, that exists between us."

"He offered to narrate the whole story to me, but I told him that when I learned it, it should be from your lips."

"That is right; have patience, and you shall hear it all, some day. It is now time for dinner."

The father passed within the room, while the daughter busied herself in the preparation of the meal. The patient was found quiet, and so far as possible, comfortable. As Father Richter seated himself, he glanced toward the door with a smile:

"Suppose we have a visitor?"

"I declare! How thoughtless!"

It was well he closed the door, for scarce five minutes had elapsed before the squaw whom Cora had offended made her appearance. She was very anxious that the missionary should pray for the safety of her two sons, who, at that moment were unheedingly clenching their fingers in some captive's hair. The good man did not hesitate to denounce their conduct in the strongest terms. He said he would gladly pray that their hearts might be changed; but as for their safety, he

did not care. In fact, he intimated it would be rather pleasing to him than otherwise to hear that both had been pretty well riddled by the rifle-balls of some party of whites. Mugalwah, especially, needed some such harsh medicine, before he could be really reformed.

This plain language offended the mother a second time, and she left, muttering some unintelligible threats against the presumptuous missionary and his daughter. Both were used to such eccentric conduct, and it occasioned neither any uneasiness.

As Father Richter had hinted, he took entire charge of the patient. The latter recovered with a rapidity that was as surprising to himself as to the missionary. He saw Cora only at rare intervals, and he was too wise, on such occasions, to revive the subject that had been so peremptorily interrupted by the rifle-ball. The Indian who had sent this deathly messenger seemed truly repentant of the deed. Despite the admonition of the missionary, he would steal up to the door and inquire regarding him. When he learned that he was recovering, his dark face lit up with a pleased expression. Thus far he had kept faith with his promise of secrecy.

About a week after the shooting of Roderick, Father Richter was sitting near his door, one sunset, conversing with Cora, when both caught a footstep at the same time. Looking up, to their surprise they saw the famous Sioux chieftain, Little Crow, approaching. He looked weary, worn, and dispirited, and merely nodding, he dropped into a seat, and for a moment said not a word.

"I am hungry and tired; I have come a long way."

Cora instantly busied herself in providing him something to eat. Noting his distaste for conversation, Father Richter forbore to question him until he had finished his meal, when he became quite talkative. It proved as the missionary had shrewdly suspected. Little Crow's forces had been defeated, and he himself was a fugitive from justice. Still, he was not fleeing ignominiously to save his life. Sullen and revengeful, he and his brother chiefs, Young Six, Big Eagle's brother, and others, had scattered themselves over Minnesota, for the purpose of arousing the other Indians to hostility. The chief was far-sighted enough to understand that their power must

be ultimately broken, but he recked not, so that he was enabled to inflict some murderous blows ere the unwieldy arm of the Government could be brought into effectual play against him.

"Do you know what has become of Mugalwah and his party?" inquired the missionary.

"His band have been scattered by Colonel Marshall, part of them killed, and he is a prisoner."

"What will become of him?"

"Hung up by the neck till dead."

"I pity him; but his fate was merited. I warned him and all of them before they went. The retribution of the Government may be slow, but it is sure, especially where Indians are concerned."

"They have not caught us all."

"But they will secure enough to break the power of your tribe. I am amazed, Little Crow, that a chief of your mind and knowledge should have begun such a war, when you could but have known what the inevitable consequence must be. I'll warrant you, Other Day has had too much sense to join you."

"It was not willingly that I went into the war; I was compelled to, and now, when I have taken up the hatchet, I shall not be base enough to desert my men."

"You, I believe, led the attack upon New Ulm, where Judge Flandreau commanded?"

"Yes; I led the assault upon Fort Ridgley also, where the Great Spirit turned aside a cannon-ball that touched my heart."

"The Great Spirit showed his displeasure with what you did, by protecting all the posts against which you directed your attacks, did he not?"

Little Crow became silent and uncommunicative, and shortly after took his departure. Father Richter suspected the object of his visit was to arouse more of the warriors of his village to assist him, but perhaps the respect the chieftain bore toward him prevented any such effort, for he took a direct route toward the Red River of the North, and was never seen in that vicinity again.

As we have already intimated, the recovery of the young ~~leader~~ was rapid; and in the afternoon that Father Richter

and Little Crow sat conversing together, he stood beside the foot of his bed, feeling almost as strong and well as ever. There was pain, as a matter of course, when his wound was disturbed, but care would prevent the necessity of disturbing it.

Though taciturn and quiet, the man had meditated a great deal during the last few days. He had learned unmistakably that his absence was desired, and he resolved that, as soon as able, he should take his departure, and never darken the door again. He knew that Father Richter would prevent any such thing did he suspect his intention, and he resolved, accordingly to leave at night.

As the afternoon wore slowly away, the hunter found himself longing for a sight of Cora. He felt if he could only exchange a word with her, he could leave with resignation. It was hard indeed to leave her forever, as he believed it should be, without exchanging farewells with her.

The Fates, however, were not propitious. As the night settled down upon the wilderness and Clearing, he could hear her voice in conversation with her father, but she did not make her appearance in his room, and finally, at a late hour, she retired, without so much as exchanging a good-night with him.

More than once he feared he should have to give over his project until the succeeding night, as the missionary could be heard moving around the room until a very late hour; but at length all became still, and the deep, regular breathing of the good man showed that he was wrapped in that deep, sweet slumber which a clear conscience and vigorous bodily health invariably give their possessor.

He judged it to be beyond midnight when he stealthily opened the door of his room and passed into the larger apartment, generally occupied through the day. Since his presence, the corner of this had been occupied by Father Richter, who preferred it to sleeping aloft. He stepped with the utmost care, and felt his way, for he had no desire to awaken either of those he was to leave behind him.

The hunter passed through the ordeal in safety, and placed his hand upon the door. He had simply to raise the latch, for such a thing as locks were unknown in that primitive community. As he opened the door, the Clearing appeared

almost as distinct, under the bright moon, as if it was mid-day. He had little fear of any one stirring at that hour, and strode boldly across the open space into the shadow of the wood beyond.

As he glanced back, he was confident he saw some one enter the door of the cabin he had just left; but, reflecting that it could have nothing to do with his welfare, he moved on.

Not until this moment had he called to mind the course he was to pursue after leaving the Clearing. He had a settled determination of bidding farewell to the missionary and his daughter, and of never returning again; but, where was he to go? The first answer to this question naturally was, "Home!" But the young man could not bring himself to that point. Strong as was his resolve to sweep from his memory the fair vision that had crossed it, still it was a difficult matter to determine to return to civilization and remain there. He had done that already, and found it insupportable.

At the time the rifle of the Sioux had brought him low, there was a question upon his lips—a question to Cora which he would fain have answered before yielding her up; but circumstances had prevented. Was his resolution of that nature that he could answer it for himself in an unfavorable manner? Had he not really overestimated the strength of his own character?

These and similar thoughts made his steps tardy and doubtful. He debated with himself a long time, and finally resolved that he should have a decisive answer from Cora Richter which should determine his course. Since he had taken this means of departure, he could not now return, nor would he dare to present himself before the missionary without some plausible excuse other than the true one.

The unsettled condition of the country lying between him and civilization was an ample pretext for deferring his passage through it. He had no liking toward remaining in this vicinity through the winter, which in this elevated region, would be excessively severe. He had never yet attempted to brave its fury alone, and it was too great a task for him to attempt, especially when he could not feel an absolute certainty regarding the result of his unhealed wound.

He now decided to go directly to the Selkirk settlement

upon Red river and remain until spring opened, when he would manage to have a meeting with the missionary's daughter. This course fully determined, he experienced considerable relief, as any one does when he has solved some perplexing anxiety.

The hunter deemed it best to make directly for the river, which was but a few miles away. Following this in its course to the north into the British Possessions, he could not fail to reach the Red river settlement, where he might domicile himself among friends for as long a period as he chose. His present purpose was simply to reach the bank and remain there until daylight before pursuing his journey further.

The roar of the stream was audible during the night-hours at the Clearing, and the hunter reached it sooner than he anticipated. He judged it to be well toward morning; but, in reality, he had sadly miscalculated the time, for it was not a half-hour beyond midnight.

The Red river, at the particular point where he struck it, was quite broad and deep. As he reached its border, he gazed up and down the bank and across the stream in quest of a suitable camping-place. The time, the condition of his mind and the surroundings were such as to induce the most impressive meditation. The sky filled with fleecy clouds, that flitted over the face of the moon and made weird phantoms upon stream and wood, the hollow, monotonous roar of the river, the solemn sound of the night-wind through the forest, and the excessive loneliness of the scene—all these conspired to arrest the thoughts of the young hunter, to impress him with a sense of vastness and sublimity, and to turn his heart to the sleepless Being above whose eye alone at that moment was fixed upon him.

Standing in this abstract manner, almost unconscious of his surroundings, his eye was arrested by some object a few feet above him, and upon examining it more critically he was astonished to observe that it was an Indian canoe, pulled just far enough up on the bank to prevent its being carried away by the current.

It was singular that with the discovery of this, there came a feeling of insecurity; and, instead of encamping, he resolved to press on without delay. As yet he was no great ways

from the Clearing, and it might possibly be that some vindictive Sioux would be on his trail at daylight.

Why not take possession of the canoe? The thought was no sooner presented than it was acted upon. The paddle was resting within it, as if the owner had left with the expectation of returning very shortly. Roderick cast a quick, searching glance about him as he stepped into it and pushed out in the stream. The current he found more rapid than he had anticipated, and it required all of his skill to manage the egg-like concern.

In the center of the river, the canoe became unmanageable, and in spite of all the hunter could do, he ran upon an island near the center, where, in absolute fear of his own safety, he sprung out, and without thinking allowed the boat to float off down-stream. When he noticed this blunder it was too late to prevent it, and, somewhat crestfallen, he turned to see what could be done in the way of an encampment until morning.

The island proved more favorable than could be expected. It was of the usual oval shape, some dozen rods in length and from a few inches to fifteen or twenty feet in breadth. There was no vegetation upon it—in fact nothing but a large quantity of drift-wood, that had been accumulating in all probability for years. In some places, it was as dry as tinder for a depth of a foot or more. By making a sort of trough-like hollow, and spreading his blanket in it, he secured quite a comfortable resting-place for the night.

Just in the border land of unconsciousness—neither asleep nor awake—was it fancy or reality that sounded as if some body had struck the solid portion of the island? Was it fancy or reality that appeared as if a person or animal was walking backward and forward? And could it be fancy, too, that bore such a marvelous resemblance to human voices?

The hunter listened for a moment, and then stealthily raised his head. There was a canoe resting upon the upper end of the island, and two men were walking slowly along the edge of the water. One of them bore something upon his back, that resembled a cask or keg.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ORIGINAL IDEA.

Oh, Time and Death! with certain pace,
Though still unequal, hurrying on,
O'erturning, in your awful race,
The cot, the palace, and the throne.—SANDS.

A SECOND glance assured the hunter that the two strangers were white men, and consequently friends. There could be no mistaking the rear man who bore the keg upon his shoulder.

"Is that you, Matt Larkins?"

The man addressed paused and looked around him.

"Didn't some'ne call me, Jim?"

"Yes; I heard it, but where did it come from, I say?"

At this juncture, Roderick Charnley arose to his feet. Both saw him instantly.

"That's you, Larkins, isn't it?" he repeated, still standing where he had arisen.

"That's the name I generally go by in Minnesota, but who might be you?"

"I am Roderick Charnley; I have met you at Fort Ridgley, and New Ulm during the past summer."

"I recollect; how do you do? how do you do? If that ain't what they call a providence, then I should like to know what it is. Here is Jim Wilkins with me, who has been searching for you for the last three weeks, and hasn't been able so much as to see a person that had heard tell of you; and just when we'd made up our mind Little Crow, Little Six, or some of the other chiefs had disposed of you, here we gets track of you down in the Clearing."

"When were you there?"

"It occurred to me that there might be some attractions for you in that place, and consequently we struck a line for it, I humbly endeavoring to pay my expenses by selling whisky along the way. When we knocked up the old man, he was kind of backward at first, and wouldn't say much till we told him our errand, and he became satisfied we wan't trying to

hoodwink him. He finally said you had been hurt bad, and he was nursing you; you was getting along pretty rapid-like, howsomever; so he thought it might do for us to see you. He struck a light, and went into a little room, and it would have done you good if you could have seen him, when he found you wasn't there. He didn't know what to say for a while, but he looked terribly frightened. He told us at last that you had gone, he knew not where. As our business was very important, we didn't stay till morning as he invited us to do, but came on across the Clearing toward the Red river; and, as luck would have it, or perhaps providence, we have struck the very island where you had hung up for the night. This is Jim Wilkins with me."

During this narration, the young hunter had been filled with the utmost amazement. What possible business these two men could have with him passed his comprehension; yet their manner showed that it was of the last importance.

"What is the business that has sent you upon such a long hunt after me?" he inquired.

"Boo! it's chilly! Let's have a fire before we talk upon business. It'll take some time to finish."

"But will it be safe?" queried Charnley. "There is nothing to prevent it being seen a long way, and I have reason to suspect that there are Sioux in the neighborhood."

"How so?"

"I found one of their canoes on the bank and crossed to this island in it."

"I didn't notice the boat; where is it?"

"I was foolish enough to let it float away after landing. A fire built here would be very conspicuous."

"Fudge! not a bit of danger. This is just the stuff to make a right down pleasant fire to sit and talk by."

A spot was brushed away and a heap of dry drift-wood speedily gathered. In a few moments this was ignited and burning cheerily. The cold night-wind blowing down the river rendered the air keen and cutting, and the warmth of the fire was very grateful. The depth of the drift-wood rendered it necessary to make a sort of hollow, such as would naturally be formed in building a fire in the snow. By reclining

upon the ground, all of the person, except the head, was protected from the wind.

Important as the business of the two men might be, they hesitated a great while about communicating it. Jim Wilkins was a tall, thin-visaged man, very reticent. Indeed, as yet, he had not spoken a single word, and the hunter more than once glanced at him, half suspecting he was deaf and dumb; but the emission of several very audible grunts placed the matter beyond question.

"Before telling you exactly what our business is," said the whisky-trader, "I want to ask you several questions, which I hope you'll answer, won't you?"

"If they are proper I certainly shall."

"In the first place, it's quite cold, and let's all three take a swallow of something to warm us inside."

The hunter declined, but the two imbibed quite freely.

"Now," said Larkins, as he proceeded to light his pipe, "you've hearn tell of these massacres that have been goin' on for the last month or so, of course."

"Yes, I went to the Clearing and warned Father Richter of his danger."

"You did? I thought all the time that it was *something else* that called you there. Wal, the row is pretty well stopped for the present. Judge Flandreau gave Little Crow a taste of powder down at New Ulm, and the detachments of United States forces in different places are beginning to move. There's trouble yet, and if you intend to go down toward the Agency, I'd advise you to keep a mighty sharp look-out for Sioux. But that ain't exactly what I'm coming at. I want to ax you which party you think most to blame?"

The suddenness of this question rather took the hunter aback, and he made no reply until it was repeated.

"Both parties are in fault; the Indians unquestionably have been wrongly used by Government agents and traders, and their suffering has goaded them to this outbreak."

"You think so, do you?" asked the trader, with a curious expression, giving at the same time a sharp, inquiring look into the face of Charnley.

"Those are my views, precisely."

"Wal, I'm sorry, that's all."

"And why are you sorry?"

"Because, if you were all right—that is—but hold on—you know I've been in the whisky-trading business for a number of year, and I have—well—done pretty well."

"I have no doubt of it."

"Are you 'quainted with the way the Indian agents out here manage affairs—in short, the way they make their pile?"

"I've no doubt there is a good deal of cheating about it, for their salaries certainly are not sufficient to make them rich very speedily."

"I was once a conductor on a railroad in Connecticut. I was new at the business, he! he! he! and went too bungling-like at it. As soon as I understood the ropes, I began to get rich a little *too fast*. The employers noticed it, and let me slide. I ought to've held in till I got enough to retire on, but I did not think of that. But an Indian agent don't have to be so careful. You see it's generally considered we've the right to shave these poor coppery rascals when we've the chance; but you don't seem to take to that way of thinking?"

"Most assuredly I do not."

"You don't believe after you'd been at it a year, you might begin to like the idee of getting rich faster than the heads of government intend? Are you right sure no such idee would ever enter your head?"

The hunter was not only puzzled but indignant at the presumptuous manner of these insulting questions. He demanded the meaning of this course of procedure. Wilkins grunted and the trader laughed.

"You know what *my* idee of these Indians—especially the Sioux—is. The only thing they're fit for is to afford us the means of making a decent living."

"What is your business with me?" demanded Charnley.

"Fetch it out, Jim," said Larkins, with a meaning look.

The long-bodied, reticent man arose to a sitting position, and reaching his right arm under his left, drew forth a large folded paper with a heavy seal upon it. The seal was unbroken, and the hunter saw his own name written in large characters upon it. He stretched forth his hand to take it. The man, in the very act of handing it, drew it back with a wild clutch, and fell forward, stone-dead, ere his two

companions were fairly conscious that a couple of rifles had been discharged from the shore.

Perfect silence for a moment succeeded this terrible interruption. Then, as the survivors appreciated what had really occurred, the hunter whispered:

"The Indians have come! We must get out of this place, if we wish to escape *his* fate."

"'Sh don't move!" admonished the trader, rising on his hands and peering over the drift-wood. He gazed very intently for a moment, and then added, as he lowered himself on his face again:

"I don't see any thing of them, and it must be there are only two, and we've no reason to fear *them*. Don't raise your head, for the fire will show it, and them villains know how to use their guns."

A few moments later, the rippling of water was heard. The trader raised his head again.

"They're coming, a whole pack of 'em, sure enough. We've got to leave, now. 'Sh! don't rise to your feet. Crawl a ways, and then run."

They had taken but a step or two, when Larkins uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"The canoe is gone; we must make a swim for it."

In the bright moonlight the two men were visible to the Sioux, who commenced discharging their pieces. This flustered both. Reaching the lower end of the island, the whisky-trader sprung in the chilling waters and swam down-stream with all his might.

Charnley still ran to and fro at a loss what to do. He had rushed into the water, but before he got beyond his depth, he recalled that he was unable to swim, and in a desperate despair he retreated to land again.

The canoe by this time had passed half the space intervening between the island and shore, although, what was rather singular, considering it was propelled by Indians, it moved very slowly. They had ceased discharging their guns, manifestly from an absolute certainty of capturing both of the men. . . .

The tormenting anxiety of the hunter was to escape from the island. He felt as though there was a chance for life, if

he could only secure a foothold somewhere else; but, on this narrow, circumscribed space, it was nothing less than being in a prison.

Why not float away by means of a piece of drift-wood? The thought flashed like lightning upon him. He did not stay to reflect that with the canoe at their command, he was quite as much if not more at their mercy, in the water as out of it; but, catching up a small tree-trunk that was as dry as timber, he made his way out in the river, and in a moment was borne rapidly downward by the current.

Although mindful of the flight of both of these men, the canoe still headed toward the island, as if more desirous of reaching that than of capturing them. Landing upon this, some six or eight in number, they proceeded to the camp-fire, where they made two discoveries that brought shouts of exultation from each throat. The first was the dead body of Wilkins, lying upon its face, and the second, the keg of whisky. When they snuffed at the latter and ascertained that it really contained ardent spirits, their delight seemed unbounded. They danced and shouted, pushed the body of the poor, unconscious Wilkins hither and thither, and finally rolled it into the river. Having finished this extemporized demonstration, they turned their attention to the "fire-water."

In the mean time Larkins had made his way down-stream, swimming with all the power he could command. He constantly glanced backward to ascertain whether he was pursued, until he suddenly became conscious that his strength had so failed him that he could not keep afloat five minutes longer.

At this critical moment, when the dreadful thought that his last moment had come almost paralyzed him, one of his feet struck bottom, and, to his inexpressible joy, he found he was in far-drier water. At the same time, he descried directly ahead of him, an island almost precisely similar to the one he had just left. He was so exhausted that he felt he must have rest, if he were certain the Sioux would be upon him in ten minutes. Carefully approaching the shore, panting and tremulous, he seated himself and looked up-stream.

The figures of the Indians were dimly discernible as they passed back and forth before the fire, and their boisterous

hilarity proved to Larkins the discovery of the keg. "That same cask has helped me more than once," he muttered, "and it may be it's going to do me a turn now. There's enough in it to set them all crazy—hello! is that you, Charley! Drop your feet and come in to shore."

The piece of wood upon which the hunter was floating was drifting past, when the trader called to him in a cautious undertone. Obeying his injunction, he made his way without much difficulty to his side.

"Why didn't you foller me? I s'posed, of course, you were right behind me."

"I did follow you for a few steps, when I recollected I wasn't able to swim, and I had to go back again."

"Whew! that was it, eh? You ought to have learned to swim when you was a boy, the same as I did; though I can't say as I am any thing extra at swimming, for I give out afore I got to this spot. Just hear 'em yell! They've got hold of the keg, sure, and 'll be on the rampage in a few minutes."

"Your friend is done for, poor fellow!"

"Yes: he didn't draw five breaths after that bullet passed through his head. I s'pose I was somewhat to blame for kindling that fire, though, if he hadn't riz up to hand you that paper—There! that reminds me for the first time, we've left that paper behind us!"

"Sure enough! so we have; and you said it was important to me."

"Important to you? It is of the greatest importance indeed."

"While we are resting here, explain this matter to me."

The trader shook his head.

"If you'd have talked different I'd have told you all about it, and opened a good chance for a spec; but you didn't take."

"What of that? Let me hear what it is."

"There's no use o' talking; I shan't tell you a thing. If you can find that paper you'll larn for yourself; if you don't find it, go down to St. Paul, and maybe you'll hear something of it."

The hunter looked fixedly at the man beside him. Although both had just escaped death almost together, he could but

feel the utmost loathing toward him. His words for the last half hour had convinced him that he was one of those men that are a curse to the aboriginal race—that he was one of the prime causes of this terrible outbreak among the Indians of the North-west. The tendency of imminent danger is to bring persons into closer intimacy, and to make friends of enemies; but it was just the opposite in this case. Could he be assured of immunity from danger among the savages, he would prefer their society infinitely above his; and although many selfish motives united to urge him to remain, still he resolved, upon the first opportunity of separating honorably, that is, without the appearance of deserting him in his extremity, to embrace it, and bid him farewell forever.

But what possibly could be the meaning of the "business" to which he had made so frequent reference, and which he professed to have been the actuating cause in bringing him and Wilkins into this corner of Minnesota, at a time, too, when it was the very region of death? Why did he so persistently refuse to reveal it? Could the plea that he entertained wrong views regarding the moral aspect of the Indian question be the genuine one? What remote result could Roderick Charnley's private opinion bear to that?

Such and similar were the unanswered questions proposed by the young hunter to himself. Happen what might, he had made up his mind to say nothing further regarding it to the man beside him. But, both were excessively weary, and although, under the present circumstances, their first thought should have been to escape from the island to the land, yet, both made their condition as bearable as it was possible to make it, by nestling down in the driftwood in quest of slumber.

Their wet, chilling clothes for a time drove away all sleep, and the Sioux upon the island above began to become uproarious in their revelry. Exhausted nature finally gave way, and almost at the same moment, the two passed off into the land of dreams.

The hunter was the first to awaken, his disturbance arising from a foreign cause. He was nearer to the upper end of the island, and for this reason was aroused by a dull thump, followed by a rippling sound. Raising his head, he observed that day was breaking, and that the keg of Matt Larkins had

floated down and lodged upon the upper end of the island. Some whim prompted Charnley to arise and bring it out of reach of the current. As he did so, he observed the trader was astir.

"Well, Charnley, this is the infernalesst piece of nonsense we have ever been guilty of."

"To what do you refer?"

"Why, our cuddling down upon this spot, when we might have got ashore, and been miles away by this time. Hello! you've saved my whisky-keg—I'm glad of that. Any thing in it?"

"Nothing, although it feels heavy enough to be full."

"That's the iron hoops around it. It's made splendid, and I'm glad to git it agin, if they did steal the contents. I hope it's made 'em all dead drunk; no, I'll be hanged if it has; yender's two, three, moving around this minute, and I wouldn't be afeard to take my oath one of 'em is Little Crow. Down with you!—they haven't noticed us yet."

Both made themselves, to all intents and purposes, invisible, each, however, keeping up an unremitting watch upon the movements of their enemies above. Three of the latter walked to the beach with such steadiness as to certify that none of the effects of the "fire-water" lingered in their brains. Their next move was to push off the canoe and start downstream, one of the Indians standing erect, the better to guide the frail vessel.

The two whites upon the island were now certain that an attempt was to be made to take them, and they were in no little anxiety about it. The whisky-trader still having his gun with him, possessed enough dry powder to make it serviceable; but the hunter's piece was in the bottom of Red river. When he ventured forth with the log of wood, he took it with him, but it was missing when he reached the island, and he judged it had fallen during his frantic struggles to keep afloat. He still had his revolver—one of those valuable weapons that can be carried beneath the water without having their charges affected; so, after all, perhaps he was better armed than his companion.

"Keep cool!" admonished the latter, giving evidence, at the same time, that he was by far the most frightened.

"Maybe they haven't seen us, after all; but if they intend to land here there'll be a row. You haven't got your gun?"

"No, it is lost; but my six-shooter will be handy in a pinch."

"Don't fire it unless they come right upon us."

"It might be a good thing, Larkins, if you should be a little more chary in your advice. I shall always act as I deem best."

In the mean time, the canoe with its three inmates came dashing swiftly downward. Whether the three Sioux suspected the presence of the men upon the island or not, they soon saw every thing was not right, and the one holding the paddle (whom the trader affirmed to be no other than Little Crow) sheered the boat off to the right, so as to avoid the exact point where they noted the suspicious signs.

As they passed about twenty feet distant from the island, their grim, paint-bedaubed faces and glowing eyes were fixed upon the spot where the two men were crouching, with such intense fixedness that neither durst raise his head. The rippling of the paddle revealed where they had passed, and the trader carefully raised his head a few inches, to obtain a glimpse. It seemed his head had scarcely ascended an inch, when a rifle was discharged from the canoe, and the whisky-trader's head dropped with such suddenness that for a few seconds the hunter believed he had been shot. But, twisting his neck around, so as to make his countenance visible, he gave one of those forced grins that told more plainly than a wail or groan the intense suffering of the soul.

"It passed so close it made me blink, and I can hear the whiz yet."

"Where are they?"

"Look for yourself."

Charley did so, and saw that the canoe had passed far below the island, and was making for the shore. Two of the Sioux were so seated that they faced him, and consequently were enabled to observe every movement of his or the trader's. He disclosed his head and shoulders to learn whether they would discharge their guns at that distance. He saw one of them raise his piece, and, after holding it aloft a moment, lower it, as though he judged the aim too uncertain.

Observing his immunity, the trader again raised his head, although it was with considerable trepidation. He saw the canoe strike the bank, the three Sioux step out and seat themselves upon a large, flat rock.

"Do you understand the meaning of that?" asked Larkins, with the same displeasing grin.

"I don't attach any particular meaning at all to it."

"If you look up above you on the island, you'll see the heads and arms of the rest of them Sioux. They're done for until to-night. Them three have managed to keep pretty sober, and they've gone and sot down there, and are going to wait for us to come into their hands, the same as you or I would sit down beside a wood-chuck's hole till he came out."

Such, beyond a doubt, was the intention of the Indians, and Roderick felt that he would be safe in the assertion that no two men had been as foolish as he and the trader had been the night before, and no two poor, unfortunate individuals had had their enemies take more complete advantage of them.

"I must examine that whisky-keg," said Larkins, picking it up, and seating himself upon the ground with it in his lap. "I hope there's a drop or two in it with which I may solace myself; no, I'll be shot if it isn't all gone! Wal, I might as well throw it out in the sea, for it isn't any more use to me."

About an hour later, the same keg might have been seen floating down the river. The Sioux were still seated like Stoics upon the shore, and could not fail to observe it. One of them pointed it out to his companions, and sent a bullet through it, more for amusement than any thing else.

The cask went on drifting down-stream, until a bend in the river hid it from view, when it began gradually to edge in to shore. When still some distance from the land, it suddenly was lifted out of the water by the shoulders of a man, who had begun to walk on the bottom. It was then shoved still further upward, and revealed the face of Matt Larkins, the whisky-trader, who looked furtively about him a moment, and then sat down with a genuine smile upon his face.

"Bless the old keg, it has done me more than one good

turn," he muttered. "When I knocked both ends out and used it for a hat, I was doubtful whether it would do or not; but it has brought me through safe, for all that bullet passed nearly as close to my head as the other one did!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A SINGULAR ESCAPE.

*Speed, Malise, speed! such cause of haste
Thine active sinews never braced.—SCOTT.*

THE idea of eluding the watchfulness of the Indians by means of the cask first occurred to the young hunter. It was greedily seized upon by Matt Larkins, who had begun to give way to despair. After great difficulty they managed to stave in both ends, when the trader ventured into the stream with it. He was shrewd enough to keep the island between himself and the vigilant Sioux until he was fairly out in the river, when he turned his whole attention to the matter of keeping afloat, knowing well enough the current would absolutely carry him beyond all danger.

The first impulse of Larkins was to make his escape known to the Indians. He had formed such a dislike to the hunter since he had ascertained he was really an upright and honorable man, that he would have rejoiced at his capture; but, he did not see how this could be accomplished without compromising his own safety. One of these fleet-footed savages could run him down in a twinkling, and no doubt would gladly do it. He was reluctantly compelled to give over the plan, and, still thoughtful and scheming, he made his way deeper into the woods.

Charley had witnessed the departure of this man with a feeling of relief. The fact that while the preparations for departure were going on, he never once referred to the escape of the hunter, caring nothing when, how, or, in fact, whether it was accomplished at all, filled him with more intense dislike than ever toward him. Could he have been assured of a safe

passage down the river by forcing his head into the cask beside him, he would have drawn back as from a serpent. No; he rejoiced a thousand times that he had seen the last of him.

Still the hunter could but watch the progress of the cask with considerable interest. He started when one of the Sioux discharged his gun, and he was certain the ruse was discovered; but, as it kept the quiet tenor of its way, he rather rejoiced than otherwise that the trader had escaped the bullet, and that he finally disappeared around the bend in the river.

Realizing that he was now really alone, he turned his attention to his own circumstances. Singular as it may seem, the uppermost thought in his mind was regarding the paper, which had been left with the dead Wilkins upon the island. Had he known that the body had been cast into the river, it is probable he would have given over all hopes of obtaining it; but he had formed the resolve to secure it, if there were any possible means of doing so.

How to accomplish this was the all-important question. The Indians upon the island above were still in a beastly stupor, and for some time to come would be no better than so many dead men. Consequently, in making his calculations, it would be safe to leave them out altogether.

But, there sat the three sleepless Sioux, with their lynx-eyed vision centered upon the island; and, so long as daylight lasted, very little could be attempted with any degree of safety. Their failure to make an open attack was simply because they deemed it inexpedient. They numbered but three, while they supposed their expected prey to consist of two fully-armed whites. Before night the remaining Sioux would be in a condition to lend assistance. They could afford to wait, if they should hold out until nightfall.

More than once it occurred to the hunter that the water intervening between the two islands might possibly be fordable. If such were really the case, he felt confident of both securing the coveted paper, and of making his final escape. The Sioux not suspecting any such move, and they being some distance away, it would be no difficult matter to keep his body so concealed as to elude them altogether, in case the depth admitted such a journey.

A few minutes' consideration ended in a conclusion to make the attempt. Creeping forth on his hands and knees, he entered the water, and swam in the fashion generally adopted by young school-boys, that is, by placing the hands upon the bottom, so as to support the body, and using the legs. As the increasing depth forbade this, he took a stooping position. When he judged half the distance was passed, the water was only to his arm-pits. A rod increased it to his neck, and he now began to move with extreme caution, for the rapid current made it a work of great difficulty to keep upon his feet.

The heart of the hunter was already throbbing with the sanguine hope of accomplishing his purpose, when he observed one of the Indians ahead of him rise to a sitting position and gaze stupidly around. It was utterly out of the question for the savage to take note of any thing around, and he almost immediately lay down again, in as profound a stupor as before.

Charney, however, under the fear of catching his eye, instantly lowered his head. At the same time he was carried entirely off his feet, and barely saved himself from drowning. When he recovered control of his movements, he had been forced almost back to the lower island. Somewhat discomfited at the result of the experiment, he made his way back to the very spot he had left a few moments before. Here he sat down to meditate upon the best course to adopt.

There was manifestly but two things to be attempted, and one of these had already proved itself almost as good as hopeless. He might strive to reach the island, always bearing in mind that there was nothing at all to fear from those upon it. Could this be safely reached, after securing the paper it would be no difficult matter to conceal himself until the departure of the entire party. Not suspecting his presence in this place, it was not likely that a search would be made.

After all, the wisest course seemed to order a repetition of his experiments, and he again stepped into the water. As he did so, he glanced back and saw that the three Sioux had embarked in the canoe, and were coming up-stream. It need scarcely be said the hunter lost no time in getting back into the hollow which he had left, and that he watched this demonstration with no little anxiety.

This proceeding looked very much as though they had begun to suspect some ruse had been played upon them; and such, indeed, was the case. They had a fear that the whisky-keg had assisted both to safety, and this voyage up-stream was for the purpose of reconnoitering and ascertaining the facts in the case.

Skillful as were these aborigines in the use of the paddle, the current of the Red river, at this portion of its course, was so rapid that their progress was difficult and tardy. However, if they came slowly it was surely, and in due time they were abreast of the island. The hindmost Sioux now took charge of the canoe, while the other two, with their rifles in hand, surveyed the spot where they knew a couple of white men *had been*. He who was there carefully kept his head out of sight, seeking to judge of the exact location of his enemies by the sound of the paddle. He noted its progress as it ascended foot by foot, and finally rounded the upper end. Here they maintained a stationary position for some time, and Charnley was convinced they meditated a "charge" upon his defenses. Under these circumstances he had resort to a stratagem that was eminently successful.

He first managed to gain a tolerably correct idea of their location without exposing himself. Then placing his revolver over the edge of the hollow, he discharged one barrel, and instantly shifting his hand a few inches to the left, fired the other barrel. This satisfied the Indians that two men with guns were still nestled there, although it did not give them a very exalted idea of their marksmanship, as neither of the three was injured. Their reconnoissance they judged to be successful, and returned down-stream to their old position.

Matters had now assumed such a phase that Charnley began to realize his imminent personal danger, and he concentrated his thoughts upon the one single idea of effecting his escape. However desirable it might be to obtain possession of the paper, this one project must now take precedence of all others.

The hunter did not fail to ask the assistance of his merciful Father. Then for twenty minutes he devoted himself to the most intense exercise of his mind. At the end of that time,

he struck his hand upon his knee, and his face flushed up with a joyful expression.

"I have it! and it's a good idea, if it did originate with me."

The excitement produced by the discovery of the plan was such that he was unable for some time to act with coolness and decision. He was certain there could be no miscarriage, and it took time and effort for him to tone himself down.

The island, as we have already intimated, was literally covered with drift-wood, most of which was dry as tinder. The hunter's first movement was to search among this until he found a small, straight stick with large pith in it. He was very particular in this respect, and when he had succeeded, he then cut the ends square off, making it about a foot and a half in length. His next step was to fashion a rod with which he forced the pith from the inside. He drove this rod backward and forward, and blew through the opening until not a vestige of the pith remained. As if to make assurance doubly sure, he inhaled his breath through it, and drew up a swallow or two of water; then, perfectly satisfied, he laid it carefully down, his joyous countenance testifying how sanguine he was of the result.

The next proceeding was to secure some six or eight large limbs, each of sufficient size of itself to float him in the water. Selecting one that suited his fancy, he set it apart, and began operations with the others.

The largest was tossed into the water so that it would float clear of the island. It had gone scarcely a rod when it caught the eye of the Sioux, and two of them at once put out from the shore to intercept it. They approached the suspicious object with great caution, paddling around it several times; but they finally pointed upon it, and discovered nothing upon which to hang the shadow of a suspicion.

Robert smiled grimly as he noted these movements. His mental programme was being carried out to the letter.

The canoe remained in the current awhile, and then passed in to shore again. It had but just reached there, when a second log was descried upon the surface. As before the canoe shot out, and it was pushed hither and yon by the paddle of the Sioux until they were convinced there was no attempt at deception, when they slowly made their way back again.

Thus far there was no break in the programme!

Some ten minutes' respite were allowed the savages, when a third object, similar to the other two, made its appearance. They watched it a short time, and then made their way out into the stream; but it would not have required an experienced eye to discover that there was much less eagerness in their movements than at first. They approached it, and merely striking it with the paddle, made their retreat again.

"Thus far," muttered the exultant hunter, "every thing goes 'swimmingly.'"

Quite an interval elapsed before the fourth log was launched, but it did not fail to attract notice, and receive a reluctant visit.

All of which was what Charnley had confidently counted upon in perfecting his scheme.

The fifth log passed the lower end of the island when the sun was in the meridian. The Sioux had disembarked, and were seated upon the shore. They could not fail to observe it, but they made no move toward intercepting it.

"Thank God!" exclaimed the hunter, from his very soul.

During the intervals elapsing between the starting of these several pieces, the hunter had employed himself in a manner that would have seemed strange to a casual observer. The reed which he had whittled and hollowed out he managed to secure to one of the large limbs, the end upon one side projecting only a few inches beyond, while it extended nearly a foot upon the other. With this he had passed out in the water several times and experimented, matters after a while assuming a most satisfactory aspect.

The time for trial had now come. Dragging the limb in question a rod or two above the island, he passed out toward shore so as to avoid striking it in his passage down-stream.

Then placing the end of the reed in his mouth, he sunk carefully down beneath the water, holding on to the lower part of the limb with both hands, and gave himself to the control of the current.

The Sioux, sitting upon the shore, descried another stick floating down-stream, and one of them passed out in the canoe to examine it. While still a few rods away, he observed it to be the same as the others, save perhaps that it

seemed a little water-soaked, and floated quite low in the water. That, however, was a very natural occurrence, and he returned to his companions, wondering, perhaps, why it was that the whites had resorted to the singular practice of showing the drift-wood off the island.

In the mean time, Roderick was making fine progress beneath the surface of the river. The limb to which he had intrusted his fortune was of cedar wood, and had been originally covered with numerous small branches, the stumps of which were grasped by his hands, while he allowed his feet to float of themselves. When abreast of the upper portion of the island, the water became so shallow that his back grazed the bottom, and he feared he should be checked altogether; but he soon swung into deeper water, and progressed as before.

The hunter soon became sensible of a great oversight upon his part. He had intended to fill his ears and nostrils with bits of his clothes, to keep out the water; but the matter had been entirely forgotten until he was disagreeably reminded of it beneath the surface. The rushing in his ears, and the effort it required to avoid drawing the water through the nose, were so disagreeable that he dropped his feet with the intention of returning and remedying the matter. To his surprise he failed to reach bottom, and, drawing his feet up, went on.

A person under the water has a very poor opportunity of judging of the progress and passage of time; but Charnley had fortified himself against the mistake of rising too soon. He held the reed firmly between his teeth, drawing deep and regular breaths of air, and calculating, as near as possible, when he was opposite the Sioux. When he judged he had reached this point, he looked to the right and left. The water appeared of a dull yellow color, and he discovered nothing. This fluid is such a good conductor of sound that he did really hear the dip of the paddle, and thus assured himself very nearly of the locality of his enemies.

Some ten minutes later his situation became so unpleasant that he was meditating upon bringing his head to the surface, when he struck the river bottom with such force that the reed was forced from his mouth, and he was obliged to rise to keep himself from strangling.

Had the attention of the Sioux been turned in the direction, they could not have failed to observe the head as it shot upward ; but, fortunately, they had dismissed all thoughts of the floating objects from their mind, and were lazily casting their eyes, at intervals, toward the island, to see that no stratagem of the whites should be allowed to hoodwink them. They were meditating moving up abreast of it to detect any such movement ; but, as this was attended with some disadvantage to themselves, they still remained in their old position. Were they to station themselves opposite the island, it was barely possible that a skillful swimmer might make his way to the other shore, his only care being to keep the island itself between him and his enemies. As it was now, they could detect any such movement at once. Larkins and Charley had baffled them, by proceeding directly up the river, thus securing themselves from observation, until the water reached their armpits, when they launched forth boldly.

The hunter kept as low in the water as possible, so that no furtive glance of the Sioux should discover him, until he had passed the same bend in the river that concealed the whisky-trader's advent upon the land. He then struck out vigorously for the shore, and reached it at a point about two hundred yards below where his predecessor had landed.

In such a high latitude as Minnesota, the cold, during the winter months, it is well known, is exceedingly severe. When the winter sets in its fierceness is terrible ; but, its summers are among the most delightful of any climate. It was fortunate for the two individuals of whom we have been writing that the mildness continued so far into September, else their several immersions in the Red River of the North might have proved almost as uncomfortable to them as the well-aimed bullets of the Sioux.

As it was, the submersive passage of Charley was a much finer thing to read about than to make. The chilling clasp of the water, the cold rush of the current, the oppressive hum that seemed to penetrate his very brain, the hurried breathing, the painful smarting of the eyes, and the stinging feeling in the nose, together with a sensation as if he was really dying after all, more terrible in itself than all the others combined :

these were some of the accomplishments of that never-to-be-forgotten journey.

As for the whisky-trader, we doubt whether any of our readers have the least concern about his emotions, and therefore we shall not take the space to narrate them.

The sensation of the hunter was any thing but comfortable when he stepped upon dry land. He was compelled to hop about awhile on each foot, to get the water from his ears, the liquid, in the mean time, flying from his garments, in much the same manner as from a dog when shaking himself; then, there was that feeling in the nose more unpleasant than all, which required time alone to displace.

He looked pitifully down at his draggling clothes, and asked himself what was best to do. He always carried a match-safe with him, and it would have required but a short time to start a fire; but it would have taken a much longer time to dry his garments; and during that precious interval the Sioux upon the upper island might recover from their debauch, and dissipate all chance of obtaining the paper.

In addition to this he was becoming ravenously hungry, and a troublesome pain manifested itself in his wound. A strong will, however, could stave off this, and make the other bearable for a long time. But did he forget his first resolve in regard to the document? No; he resolved the paper must be secured before the bodily wants were heeded.

There was but one course for him to pursue, and that was to go to a point above the unconscious Sioux, and then, by the aid of some float, make his way out into the stream, and land upon the upper portion of the island, after which his action was to be dictated by circumstances.

He had hardly decided upon this, when he became sensible of a peculiar smell in the air, resembling burning wood. For a time, he was unable to locate it, but at last detected a faint smoke arising from behind a rock. The thought that there were Indians so near him made him exceedingly careful in his movements. He was standing exposed to any that might be in the vicinity; but, feeling pretty positive that he had not been seen, he set out to discover who had kindled the fire.

First: assuring himself that his revolver was ready for an

emergency, and holding it in his hand so as to be ready at an instant's warning, he approached the rock. By going around either end of this, he might be brought face to face with the Indians, and thus make a collision unavoidable. It was hardly probable that any of them was star-gazing at this time of day, or even lying upon the ground; he accordingly concluded to crawl stealthily along the surface, and peer down upon them.

The contour of the rock favored such a proceeding, and he lost no time in putting it in execution.

On his hands and knees then, one hand still grasping the revolver, he crawled over the rock, and, removing his hat from his head, he slowly shoved his forehead forward, until the eyes projected beyond the line of the rock. There was little need of this caution. The only person he saw was Mr. Larkins, stretched flat upon his back, sound asleep. At his feet a small fire was burning, or rather smoldering, for it was evident it had not been replenished for fully an hour. Near by it was a heap of sticks, which had been collected for fuel, and a little farther away was the whisky-keg, or rather that which remained of it after head and bottom were removed. The trader's limbs were outstretched, as if he had been flung upon the ground, and remained in the position in which he struck. His hat was off, and his mouth was open.

The hunter watched him for several moments with a feeling of contempt and pity—contempt for one whose nature was so degraded as to engage in such a disgraceful calling, and pity for the death-bed remorse, and final damnation of soul he was assuredly laying up for himself. Ah! Matt Larkins, there is assuredly a time coming when you shall bemoan your misspent life, for “what profiteth it a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

“Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience he stands waiting,
With exactness grinds he all.”

While still looking down upon the form of the trader, his eyes suddenly opened to their widest extent, with a wild, startled expression, as if he had suddenly become aware of some great peril impending over him. For a few seconds he gazed fixedly at the face looking down upon him, as if unable

to identify it, and then the look of terror gradually faded from his own.

"Why, Charnley, is that you? How you scart me. Did you wake me? Come down here."

"Remain where you are; there is no occasion for my coming down."

"How did you get away?"

"What was the matter contained in that paper of Wilkins?"

"Git out! I told you I wouldn't tell you, and I won't. If you'd have talked a little different I might. But say! how in the name of common sense did you give them Sioux the slip? I never expected to see you off there."

"You answer no question of mine and I answer none of yours."

"All right! But for all that we've had quite an adventure; something we can boast of to our *children*, eh?"

"If I deserted a comrade, when death was upon him, it strikes me I would say as little as possible about it."

"You could have gone off with me as well as not; I'm sure I didn't hinder you."

"There is no need of talking about the matter; we look differently at every thing."

The trader had risen to his feet and now passed around the rock. The hunter, at the same time, took his position upon the ground, and the two thus stood face to face.

"Charnley, you're a little crusty. We're a good ways up in the north-west, where we've got a confounded sight more of enemies than of friends. Since I've lost Wilkins I was afraid I should have to go north into Selkirk settlement to get out of this scrape, and I'm a little skeery about things any way. I was doubting my seeing you again, but I'm mighty glad you've come. We can now stick together and make the trip back in safety; can't we, old boy?"

Roderick turned upon his heel without a word, and walked deliberately away. Since then he has never seen Matt Larkins the whisky-trader.

CHAPTER IX.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

He could not rest, he could not stay
Within his tent to wait for day;
But walked him forth along the strand,
Where thousand sleepers strewed the sand.

SIEGE OF CORINTH.

THE hunter had landed upon the same side with the Sioux, and consequently was obliged to pass them in ascending to the proper point in the river. By keeping well back from the shore there was no necessity of incurring any risk in doing so. The afternoon was now well advanced and time was precious. If he tarried upon land until the savages recovered from their debauch the chances for obtaining the paper were well-nigh hopeless, for at such times the American Indian, like his pale-faced brother, is morose and more dangerous when disturbed than at other times.

After leaving the whisky-trader, Charnley made his way as rapidly as possible up-stream, for he began to fear that he had deferred the attempt already too long. When opposite the island, he came down to the shore and surveyed it. The Sioux still lay there, in all manner of positions, like men shot dead while making an assault, and were apparently as lost to all outward things, as if the breath of life had in reality departed from their bodies.

The contour of the shores was such that his view of both for a considerable distance was perfect. Casting his eye down-stream, he was somewhat startled to find the three Sioux were invisible. Their canoe could be dimly discerned, lying in close to the bank, but the owners had departed.

This wore a suspicious look to the hunter. Not once, while he was crouching upon the island, had all of the three been invisible at the same time. The proverbial patience of the aborigine is such as to forbid the supposition that they had become wearied with watching. It seemed more probable that they had withdrawn from sight in the hope of luring their prey forth, and had divided and ascended the

bank in order to maintain a more critical watch upon their movements.

Roderick was debating the matter in his mind, when he caught the crackle of a twig as if made by the passage of some person. With a throb of alarm he turned around. Nothing was to be seen, yet he was positive there was some living thing in close proximity. His own position was such that he was equally certain, wherever or whatever it was, that he had been seen. His supposition was that one of the Indians had come up upon this side of the river while another had ascended upon the opposite side, and the third had maintained his original station, save that he had withdrawn further from shore.

As it was, he felt exceedingly uneasy, knowing that he was a target for any stray bullet, and he came to the conclusion that the best thing to be done under the circumstances was to get out of the neighborhood as quickly as possible. Glancing hither and yon to ascertain the point from which the danger threatened, he fixed upon a short stumpy tree, as the shield of the Indian. It was of sufficient diameter to afford an admirable cover to his body, and the fact that there was a bush but a few feet away, satisfied the hunter that death lurked behind that identical tree.

Charnley started to move away, keeping his eye fixed upon the tree. He had not taken three steps when he saw a black eye and slit of painted face slip to view, while at the same time a rifle-barrel was leveled straight at him and discharged. He was not struck, but the bullet could have come no closer without slaying him.

The effect of this shot upon the hunter was to enrage him. No other word but rage will express his emotion when this deliberate attempt at taking his life was made. The first question he asked himself was, what reason had this Indian to fire at him? He had never sought to harm him, but, on the contrary, had ever been the steadfast friend of the red-man; and now this ungrateful dog had just done his best to send him out of the world.

He jerked his revolver from his waist and rushed toward the tree, determined to discharge the whole five barrels into the body of the Sioux, when, lo! the savage turned upon his heel and fled!

This, if possible, rendered Charnley more infuriate than ever.

"Hold on! you cowardly dog!" he shouted. "Hold on a bit, and I'll give you your full of that kind of game."

But the Indian disregarded the peremptory summons, and continued his flight with all his might, while the hunter pursued, firing his revolver until every barrel was emptied without inflicting a scratch. The Sioux possessed by far the most fleetness, and rapidly gained upon the hunter. The latter finding he had done no injury, caught up a large-sized stone, and hurled it with such skill and force that it gave the fugitive quite a respectable thump in his back. The latter uttered a terrified yell and sprung a foot or two in the air, doubtless thinking he had received his death-wound. He now went like the wind, nevertheless, and seeing how matters were going, the hunter gave up the chase in disgust.

When Charnley had time for reflection, he looked upon this occurrence as exceedingly dangerous—that is, dangerous in the consequences it was likely to bring upon himself. His great desire had been to keep the fact of his escape from the island from becoming known to the Sioux, so that, in carrying out his scheme, he should not be obliged to maneuver against them. Now that they had learned or would shortly learn that he was upon shore, it was more than probable that they would turn their whole attention toward capturing him, and thus little opportunity would be given for him to secure the document.

He began to ask himself whether, after all, it would not be best to let the paper go, and free himself from the network of danger that was beginning to encompass him. If the matter was of much importance he would assuredly hear of it in the course of time. If it were only some project that had originated in the head of the whisky-trader, it were perhaps as well unknown as known. Be what it might, almost any person would have pronounced it foolhardy to attempt to discover under the present aspect of circumstances.

If he gave up the project, what should he do? Wander hither and thither through the wilderness, like some aimless adventurer? The distaste for this, added most likely to that curiosity which is inherent in all our natures, decided him to

make the attempt immediately, let the consequences be what they might. He, therefore, resumed his ascension of the river, keeping well under cover as he did so, and pausing at intervals to assure himself that he was not followed. In this manner he progressed fully a quarter of a mile above the upper island, at which point he decided to venture out in the river, and if not "cross the Rubicon," cross very nearly the Red river.

The hunter being incapable of swimming, it became necessary to secure something upon which to float. This proved a more difficult matter than he supposed, but he finally succeeded, his safeguard this time being much the same as he had used on the previous occasion.

On the very point of embarking, he discerned the canoe ascending the stream, keeping close in to shore as if seeking to escape observation. He drew back and watched its movements with anxious interest. Nearly abreast of the island it headed toward it, and a few seconds later the figures of two Indians could be seen moving to and fro. As they shortly disappeared from view, he judged they had seated themselves upon the ground by their companions.

The afternoon was now so far advanced, that Charnley concluded to defer his embarkation until nightfall. His approach to the island during the darkness it is obvious would be attended with far less peril than during the daytime, although it was by no means improbable that by that time he would have the whole band of Sioux to operate against.

It was hardly dark, when he cautiously waded out in the stream, as far as its depths would permit, and set out upon his perilous undertaking. It required great effort to make his way far enough out to land upon the upper end; but he succeeded, and with a beating heart began creeping toward the smoldering camp-fire.

Every yard, the young man paused and looked around and listened. He could discern nothing suspicious, and in a few moments he was within a few feet of one of the Indians. He progressed now, it may be said, inch by inch, until he was directly among the sleepers. Then he halted, and as well as the gloom would permit, peered around. Of course he saw nothing of the body of Wilkins, but his heart gave a great

bound, when he discerned something glistening in the dim light that he was sure was the precious missive for which he was searching. Working his way a short distance further, he placed his hand upon it. Ay! it was the document, thus strangely preserved, and Charnley clutched it with a nervous hand.

He was endeavoring carefully to extricate himself from this network of danger, when an iron grasp was laid upon his shoulder and a low voice muttered:

"How do, brudder? Much glad to see you."

The young hunter glanced up and saw the three Sioux standing behind him.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

Weave me the woof. The thread is spun.
The web is wove. The work is done.—GRAY.

It is said the ruling passion is strong in death. When Roderick was seized by the Sioux his first act was to open the document and attempt to read it; but the darkness would not permit, and he placed it in his bosom, until a better opportunity should offer.

The captors, who were the Sioux that had not partaken of liquor, manifested no vindictive or cruel disposition. They were in fact members of Father Richter's people, who were out hunting and who had no intention of shedding the blood of innocent persons. It was not they who had shot Wilkins, but having discovered the white men in their vicinity, they resolved on capturing them if possible, and we have narrated, at length, the efforts put forth to do so, and shown also, that they deserved no credit that our hero, after all, fell into their hands.

Now that they had secured him, the first thing they did was to remove him from the island, for it would never have done for a white man to have fallen into the hands of those upon the island. They resolved to take the hunter back to

their own people, perhaps to hold him awhile, and then release him as their whim dictated.

It was with rather novel feelings that Roderick Charnley, the next morning, found himself again crossing the Clearing in the direction of the village. He was hopeful that they might pass the cabin without being discovered by the missionary, but, at that critical moment, he came forth and greeted them. A few words explained all. Father Richter commanded them to release him, and they did so without protest.

At this juncture, it occurred to Charnley that he had not yet examined the paper in his possession. He now drew it from his breast and opened it. It was simply his appointment as Indian agent. Matt Larkins and his friend had represented that they could the most speedily reach the young hunter, and, consequently, had been intrusted with its delivery from a certain point. Their intention in doing this was to extract a pledge from him in regard to themselves before acquainting him with his appointment. Failing in this, they cared not whether he received the document at all.

Charnley handed the paper to the missionary. As the latter perused it, his face lit up with a smile.

"Why, how is this, Roderick?"

"I do not know. I never solicited such an appointment."

"Some of your friends then have done it for you. Come in the house, and let us talk of this."

"Do you know you have treated me in rather a strange manner?" said Father Richter, when they had seated themselves.

"It would have been much more strange had I remained with you after the rebuffs I have received at your hands."

"When wounded you were my guest; when you were well there could be no occasion for remaining, but until then I expected you to remain."

"Why is it, Father Richter, that you have treated me thus?"

"Place yourself in my position, Roderick, and then ask whether you would not do the same."

As has been remarked in another place, it had been the missionary's custom to make at long intervals a visit to the frontier. One of these journeys was undertaken three years

previous, and his daughter Cora accompanied him. It was at this time that they encountered Roderick Charnley, who imagined himself in love with the fair blossom of the wilderness at first sight. With a foolish want of discretion, he went immediately to her father and asked permission to sue for her hand. Had he approached the matter in a proper way, it is very probable that he would have succeeded. But the idea of yielding up his cherished daughter, his only companion in his distant home, was one that could not be entertained; consequently the lover received a most emphatic refusal, with the command never to speak to either again. When, therefore, the young hunter made his appearance at the Clearing, some time afterward, it was natural that Harvey Richter should question his motives and wish for his absence, and it was characteristic of the good man that he should tell him so.

"I can only complain," said Charnley, in answer to the last remark, "that you would not listen and hear me through. My position in your household has been such, that the subject could not be referred to; but if you would only consent to hear, and then, if you choose to refuse, I will say nothing to say."

"I will now listen."

"You know then, Father Richter, that I have long entertained the hope of calling your daughter my wife. I can appreciate your feelings when you judged that by doing so you gave her to me to take hundreds of miles away from you, but on that point you are mistaken. It has always been my intention to settle down near you, so that you could have your daughter as much as ever. Now that I am Indian agent, I shall do so under any circumstances. You have been carrying on a good work among these people, and can not I now join hands with you, in my new position?"

"I have thought a great deal of this during the last day or two, and painful as it has been to me, I had resolved, that if my daughter's happiness demanded it, to give her to you, even if you left me alone, I should do so. Now, that you declare your purpose of remaining by me, I can offer no objection. It lies with you and her."

"It is settled then, I think," smiled the hunter.